

Wilderness Survival

A

Guide to

the

Aesthetics

of
Survivalism

Contents

4	The Aesthetics of Survivalism Niels Henriksen
10	Wilderness Anna Bak
	11 Introduction—14 Self-awareness—16 Lifestyle—19 Wilderness—22 The right place—24 Shelter—28 Knowing where you are—31 Moving locations—33 Recourses—34 Tools—36 Stop, Plan, Execute, & Re-evaluate—38 Self-discipline—42 Animals and Packs —43 Monogamy—44 Total isolation—47 Stress—50 Anxiety—53 Boredom—56 Going bush-wacky—59 Future—60 Hope—61 Preparation: the bug-out bag—63 Never look back
78	Robert's Quarry & The Walnuts Harvest François Dey
102	Watching Mushrooms Grow Joris Lindhout
130	Winter, 2014 Pádraic E. Moore
139	Acknowledgments
140	Image captions
142	Colophon

The Aesthetics of Survivalism

A series of woodcut prints by Anna Bak presents in a slightly ineffectual manner acronyms such as BLISS: blend in, low silhouette, irregular shape, small, secluded location; SPEAR: stop, plan, execute, assess, reevaluate; and SURVIVAL: size up the situation, remember where you are, vanquish fear and panic, improvise, value living, act like the natives, live by your wits. These acronyms are codes for survival in the wilderness of nature or in the absence of social organization. The medium of the woodcut prints brings to mind the paradox of survivalism as the imagination of an impoverished state from the point of view of a non-impooverished state. The coarseness of the letters and texture of the printing block mimic the natural and the makeshift, thus belying the fact that these are fragile paper prints destined for the walls of warm and dry living rooms.

Niels Henriksen

Survivalism, also called prepping, anticipates disaster and post-disaster scenarios with a particular focus on collecting tools and developing procedures that will secure survival in the absence of physical and organizational infrastructures. Survivalism as a twentieth-century phenomenon is historically specific to the experience of uncertainty as it has developed through the century. The beginning of survivalism is dated to the crash of the New York Stock Exchange in 1929. Since then, various survivalisms have been formulated in response to the more or less concrete threats of nuclear annihilation, overpopulation, socioeconomic breakdown, ecological disasters, terrorist attacks, natural disasters, and biblical

apocalypse. In other words, survivalism is the attempt to predict an unforeseeable future to determine in advance which tools, machines, and codes of conduct will most efficiently accommodate basic human needs after the breakdown of civilization. Survivalism can thus be seen as a science fiction, a dark futurism, or a speculative ecology of things.

At the 2014 Sejerø Festival on the small Danish island of Sejerø, Anna Bak explored the scenario of an abandoned survivalist shelter. A total installation in a derelict farm building presented huge amounts of seemingly worthless objects amassed in preparation for a disaster unknown and indecipherable to the viewer. A cracking male voice, presumably belonging to the survivalist, relayed a message over a loudspeaker, which did not give any clue as to the reasons for his absence from his shelter. Had the preparation for disaster gotten the better of the survivalist, or had disaster struck, unbeknownst to the rest of us?

The intended future applicability of survivalist projects most often go untested because either disaster does not happen, or disaster strikes but not in the form that the survivalist had envisioned and prepared for. More interesting and complex is the utility of survivalist preparation in the present, which often serves the psychological function of instilling a sense of control over events that are essentially beyond control. Thus survivalism more likely reflects traumatic past experiences than plausibly realistic predictions of the future. The relationship of survivalism to the future is double-edged:

whereas survivalism finds its justification in fear of disaster, it is often covertly motivated by a desire to escape the ambiguities specific to life in the present. In that way, survivalism is—once more, paradoxically—related to the pastoral landscape.

Ideas of the pastoral landscape arose in early modern Europe at a time when population numbers were rising and conditions surrounding land ownership and use were becoming increasingly complex, excluding all but the privileged. In contrast to the hostile environment envisioned by the survivalist, the pastoral described a benign nature, accommodating the needs and desires of humans. Both understandings of nature, however, hold the promise of human emancipation. The British architectural critic Reyner Banham describes this clash between imported European ideas of the pastoral and firsthand experience with non-pastoral nature as foundational for the specifically American conceptualization of the relationship between humans and nature through technology. At the frontier, the only technology that makes sense is portable, durable, and self-dependent. But what does it mean when the gadget, which is the descriptive term for this kind of technology, is introduced into everyday (post-frontier and pre-disaster) life?

As ethics and aesthetics—that is, as a rule of conduct and principle of design—survivalism differs significantly from utopianism. Whereas utopianism denotes the deliberate proposition of an unrealistic scenario with the aim of criticizing the present condition, survivalism is defined by its claim to be the art of the

possible. Survivalism may be seen as a fetishization of the pragmatic, driven by an unacknowledged desire to restore the harmony of an imagined past. Sharing the objective of a change for the better (even if the utopianist does not believe it and the survivalist will not admit it), utopianists and survivalists tend to be attracted to the same scenarios: secluded, spacious, and unregulated landscapes such as deserts or forests. Even the structures that they erect and inhabit in these places are at times close to identical. In her graduation project, Anna Bak constructed a cabin modeled on Henry David Thoreau's cabin at Walden Pond in Massachusetts and Ted Kaczynski's (the Unabomber) cabin in Lincoln, Montana. The former was a stage set of a feigned return to nature based on ideas of the pastoral; the latter was a minimalist shelter. Survival denotes the bare minimum of existence. Thus survivalism, as the preparation or rehearsal for survival, is based on the distinction between essential and non-essential needs. Food, water, and shelter are obvious physiological necessities. The inclusion of art and literature in the survivalist's kit, on the other hand, serves social needs, which are specific to the human survivalist and not easily defined. This is why the book collections of Ted Kaczynski and the North Pond Hermit of Maine, another research interest of Anna Bak's, are such objects of fascination. We read them as concretizations of the bare minimum of human sociability in object form.

It follows that artists of the postwar era have adapted survivalism as an aesthetic program. The logic of this

adaptation is not dissimilar to that of avant-garde primitivism's search for the essential and originary world in other forms of artistic production. Whereas early twentieth-century primitivism looked to non-Western culture to affirm social norms and gender roles, which the (primarily male and Caucasian) artists perceived to be under threat in modern Western civilization, post-World War II art, as seen in the work of Joseph Beuys, poses the aesthetic of bare necessity against technological progress perceived to have gone awry. This is exemplified by Beuys' 1957–1958 submission for a Holocaust memorial that was based on assemblages of electrical apparatuses (including hot plates and a record player) and materials such as felt, fat, and stone. Of course, the idealization of an envisioned pre-technological realm does not amount to a critique of technology—not that that was strictly what Beuys was doing, but it was how his work was read. Nor, as we should know by now, does the attempt of the artist to dissociate him- or herself from the social stresses of modernity constitute a viable strategy for mounting a critique of social norms; rather, assumption of this role affirms an ideal of the artist thriving in splendid isolation from history and society rooted in nineteenth-century bourgeois Romanticism. The subject of this book is that myth of artistic production as it lives on in the present day in the configuration of institutional and discursive frameworks for art.

Anna Bak

If you've picked up this book and opened to this page, you've probably already thought about the title. And I can assume that you have a will to survive and an interest in knowing how to survive. Most people will not be too concerned about this topic. To them it is not a question of how to survive; they simply keep on living without thinking about how and why.

Survivalism is as much a lifestyle as it is a philosophy. Choosing a life of solitude in the wilderness is a tough choice, but nonetheless a choice you will find rewarding in many ways, if only you are committed and willing to master the knowledge necessary for survival. This book will take you through some of the basic ideas as well as the more practical problems surrounding wilderness survivalism.

In order to create a new society, it is necessary to leave behind society as we know it. If you were completely confident in your life and in your likelihood of surviving, you probably would not be reading this book. And good for you that in fact you are questioning certain things. The

last thing you want to be is a satisfied, complacent, non-worrying zombie citizen who just follows along. These types of people will not only be the first to duck under when problems arise, but they are also less aware and unable to fully grasp the world around them. Surviving was never meant to be easy, but an easy life should neither be a preferable choice.

Overcoming obstacles, learning by doing, fixing problems, improvising, using your senses, and instinct, being intuitive and creative—these all lead to a more fulfilling and meaningful life, bringing you joy as well as increasing your chances for survival. But don't make the mistake of assuming that finding yourself in a survival situation would necessarily be fun. Wilderness survival is not a game. There are no rewards for challenges, and there is no immunity.

Of course, it seems much easier to simply keep on living as one is used to in a society that has made life so comfortable that you hardly ever have to consider making any choices of your own. But to most people, this

is the curse of being human; we cannot truly be satisfied by the sheer maintenance of life. Humans have a will to meaning. We want to believe that there is a meaning to our lives and existence. Animals live by instinct: they are only worried about surviving and don't think too much about their so-called meaning. But humans have some kind of philosophical, almost religious, belief that each life on Earth has been put here with a purpose. That is why most people find themselves depressed or feeling worthless if they don't experience the feeling of having personally contributed to something positive through their individual skills or knowledge. By learning basic survival techniques—through using your knowledge and acquiring new skills—you will not only survive but also feel rewarded by imbuing purpose to your life.

The first question you should ask yourself when it comes to planning your survival is: Why? The reasons may seem obvious, but the tasks that lay ahead, the work that comes with preparing for your survival, will be strenuous and mentally challenging.

On bad days you might find yourself alone, isolated, and doubting the reasons for all of this effort. It is hence important that you make your motivations totally clear to yourself in advance, so that it will be easier to deal with such questions later on.

Many might see the survivalist lifestyle as one that entails harsh or negative thinking, but it is actually a positive attitude to life, the goal to survive. In choosing survivalism, you are already claiming that you believe survival is possible, as long as the necessary preparation and precautions are taken. If you lack the confidence to survive, or doubt the general idea of survivalism altogether, you will likely have difficulty keeping a healthy state of mind, and the risk of giving up or going bush-wacky becomes more pronounced.

In order to embark on a survivalist lifestyle, it is important to be in good shape mentally and physically. But you can spearhead this process with the right preparation. Some people probably question whether

they are even fit for this kind of task, doubting their ability to perform bigger building projects or hone their craftsmanship. But mankind has proven itself very capable of adjusting and learning appropriate skills in situations where they become necessary. And there is nothing more for fulfilling and satisfying than upending one's self-doubt and acquiring the skills to create. The joy of using your own hands for creating is often underestimated. It is an empowering feeling to look at something that at first seemed like an impossible feat for a single individual to accomplish, slowly become real with the effort of only your own two hands.



Spokane, Washington, USA, 2013

So, don't ask yourself: "Can I do it?"

Ask instead: "How can I do it?"

I can't pinpoint the exact day I chose to become a survivalist; as I've stated before, it is a lifestyle and a philosophy. The instinct was always a little bit present in me, but it has grown stronger throughout the years. I suppose I never wanted to adapt to comfort. Even as a child, I always found myself playing differently from the other kids. I never wanted the toys everyone else had; instead, I could spend hours by myself, not being able to explain to my parents what I had been up to.

I remember one of my favorite activities was to walk up and down the fields with my eyes closely fixed to the ground. You see, I grew up in what used to be an old Viking settlement, and so it was not unusual for me to find small remnants of clay jugs scattered underneath the earth there. I would pile up buckets and buckets of these pieces in our garage. I didn't exactly know what to do with them, but I loved the pursuit of a treasure hunt, spending hours getting my small Wellingtons dirty

in the soft earth until it was too dark to see or my pail weighed too heavy to return to the farm. My grandfather was interested in archeology and hoped that this hobby of mine might lead me to become an archeologist someday. He'd often show me history books and his own treasures, but these never held the same power as the objects that I'd found myself. I was only slightly interested in hearing what these objects used to be when in one piece, how people had used them, how they were made, and how they could be so well-preserved in the ground after so long. The history of the Vikings, and history in general, was slightly boring to me. I liked to line up these bits according to size or shape, and try to piece them together, imagining the shape of the whole object. Later, I began to create my own objects and secret shelters in which to house them. I liked to frequent this small lake—actually, it was more like a waterhole—where I would examine the insects, lizards, and other creatures that lived there, studying their behavior in detail. Needless to say, I didn't become a biologist either.

Self-awareness
Native Americans believed that young boys should embark on a Vision Quest after having reached a certain age. Walking on his own in nature, in complete isolation, while fasting and meditating, the boy would enter into a trance state with guidance and knowledge from a supernatural force or spirit. This guiding force would often reveal itself physically as an animal—what Native Americans referred to as a Power Animal—and the powerful traits and characteristics of that animal would empower the young man, enabling him to complete his journey.

We could learn a lot from the Native American tradition of the Vision Quest in our pursuit to attain self-awareness. Remove yourself from your usual surroundings and distractions and find a quiet place where you can meditate and listen to your self. Spend your time appreciating the beauty of wherever you are and contemplate every aspect of your surroundings. Time spent alone enables you to notice the small things in life, effectively clearing the mind and lifting the spirits, and allows for the mind

to focus inward. Think of the Power Animal as a metaphor for your strongest qualities and talents; in order to fully realize your abilities, it is necessary to be self-aware. We all have goals and ideas about what we expect to accomplish with our lives. Sometimes these goals can run into conflict with society's ideas about how success and happiness are defined and measured. At the same time, the pressures emanating from our social environments can lead us to doubt our self-worth, decrease our confidence, and ultimately undermine our talents. It is important to have a realistic self-image, to not overestimate your own strengths nor undermine your innate qualities and talents.

Many cultures traditionally employ hallucinogens during Vision Quests, using, for example, peyote, salvia, or Ayahuasca in ceremonial contexts due to their mind-altering nature. It is believed in these societies that in order to outgrow habits and free your mind—to truly become self-aware—one must enter into a psychedelic trance state. Psychedelic psychotherapy is common in many religious ceremonies

throughout the world and has been used for centuries.

These drugs are believed to facilitate a beneficial exploration of the psyche. Hallucinating and exploring the mind through trance can be very healthy, but be aware that it should only be used as a mind-opening experience and not as an escape route. If you feel limited in your ability to reach full self-awareness, it might be useful to try hallucinogens, but I would recommend making this a single journey, while further practicing self-realization through non drug-induced sessions of isolation and meditation. You are naturally more vulnerable during a psychedelic trance state; not only does your mind become more cloudy, but your body is also affected physically by the drugs, potentially leading you to feel weak, sick, or lose your balance and not be able to perform well. This is not a desirable state to be in when facing the wilderness in a survival mode, so think carefully about when, where, and how, if at all, you should use hallucinatory drugs.

It is never too late for a Vision Quest, and I believe that you

can actually have several Vision Quests in your lifetime. Whenever you feel in doubt or led astray, isolation and meditation can reacquaint you with yourself.

I once got lost in the woods. I was just scattering about and didn't feel like I had gone that far. But just as I was following a scent I could not recognize, I suddenly found myself deep in the woods until I couldn't notice the smell anymore. At first I thought to myself that I knew this area well enough that my sudden disorientation shouldn't be a cause of concern, but then I remembered a story from my childhood. It was about this young boy who had followed a cat into the forest through his backyard. His parents had seen him play with the cat earlier, but didn't notice him taking off into the wild. One week later, they found his jacket—they never found the boy. They suspected that wild coyotes had maybe gotten to him.

I really wanted to get back on track and find my way out of the forest, but as the sky grew darker it became more difficult to recognize anything that might have indicated clues as to where I was.

I began to breathe heavily and became very nervous. I would not be eaten by coyotes (there weren't any coyotes here), I was not going to freeze to death (it was not cold enough), and I would not starve—I would surely find my way back before that. But being alone in the dark and unknown sent shivers up my spine and made my thoughts run wild. I sat down and considered all possible dangers with a rational mind; nothing crucial came up. Then, I imagined myself rising up from my sitting spot and flying over the tree line. I could still see myself sitting down there on that stump and if I turned my head to the right, I could see the road. I took a deep breath and noticed all of the particles in the air, lifted myself up and walked home.

Lifestyle

Survivalism is much a lifestyle as it is a philosophy. You will have to convince yourself that this is the right lifestyle for you. This is not something that is determined simply by making a decision: it entails a constant battle with your thoughts and doubts regarding your reasons for the decision.

We live in a world that values income and social status, and a lot of our habits and cultural heritage are strongly influenced by deep-rooted ideas about what a healthy, happy life should be. It is difficult to distance yourself from these social models. When you try, you are often met with skeptical questions about the necessity and reasons for this way of living. Some might even see this lifestyle as a rejection of or unnecessary demonstration against society, a rebellious act against a world that appears to be well-functioning. To these people, your behavior might seem overindulgent or ungrateful. You will have to ignore them. What you are doing might not adhere to the socialist idea of contributing to society with hard work in order to build a functional structure that equally benefits all. What you are doing is taking care of yourself, discovering your own best qualities, and learning the skills necessary for you to achieve and maintain a meaningful life. In the end, that really is using your full potential. Moreover, it is beneficial to everyone, even within a societal structure. Humans are a very social-minded race, and we tend

to always compare ourselves to one another as if we were living in a giant animal pack. We assume that everybody must contribute with the same effort and force in order to keep her or his place within the group. But survivalism is not about working hard to maintain your social status among the group; on the contrary, it is about learning to be self-sufficient.

Self-sufficiency requires you to give up certain ideas about control and routines. There will no longer be a steady income upon which you can depend or with which you can pay for your apartment, along with all of the other material goods you have long surrounded yourself with in order to make your life easy and comfortable. Friends and family should not be trusted for support nor expected to be willing to help you either physically, mentally, or financially. You might still be able to maintain some friendships, but this will definitely be easier with people who already share your beliefs.

Try to think about other people as external assets: you should be able to live without them, though

they can be valuable to keep in your contacts. Your friends will also have to be willing to accept the circumstances of your lifestyle, meaning that they cannot expect for you to be present and available at any given time, or arrive at your home without reason or prior warning. If they cannot understand your lifestyle, having such friends will only lead to conflicts. They might view your isolation as a paradisiacal retreat or an invitation for them to join you for quality time in quiet surroundings. Your friends will have to understand that your survivalist lifestyle is as much hard work and as time-consuming as any other task in life. Likewise, you will have to accept that this quest is yours and yours only. You cannot ask for external help or support during moments of doubt. This is a lot to ask from friendships and you will find that most people cannot accept such terms, opting rather to remove you from their social life altogether. If this happens, don't think of it as a loss, as it presents the opportunity for immense personal gains. It will only benefit you to know that the few people, if any, in

your reach are trustworthy and understanding, not demanding and judgmental. Don't feel obligated to respond to their skepticism and questions about the purpose of your projects and their outcomes.

"Home" is a word most people can relate to, although everyone defines it according to different criteria. It might be where you were born and raised, your home country, or where your bed happens to be at that precise moment. But for most people, the word home is connected to the feeling of a safe habitat, a space for relaxation and leaving all of one's worries behind. In the wilderness there is no home. You might have a shelter where you spend your nights and therefore identify as a home, but it is important to realize that this place



Nevada, USA, 2013

is not for relaxing and cannot be viewed as a safe, permanent home. You might have to move around a lot, so it is crucial to abandon all emotional attachments to a certain place.

Your personal belongings should also be limited, not only for the practical reason of being able to move quickly at any moment's notice, but also for other reasons. Most of the things we own are out of convenience or sentimentality. Unless your belongings have a practical function that aids your survival, you will have to detach yourself from them. And be thorough and thoughtful about this—as I will explain later, many tools can be made from the resources in your area and therefore it is not necessary to drag along materials with you all the time. Humans can be greedy when it comes to their belongings; we feel not only the need to possess, but also have a hard time of letting go of objects once they have entered our lives. Hoarding is a mental illness that can easily have an adverse impact on your life. Becoming emotionally attached to your belongings, developing strong bonds to objects in general, will

constrain you and prevent you from thinking rationally about what is absolutely indispensable and what is necessary for your survival.

Many crucial lifestyle changes must be made in order to adapt to survivalism. Don't expect to learn and change everything simply by reading this book. It will take as many years to modify your views as it has taken to bring you to your current state. But by taking small steps and slowly developing your outlook, you will find these obstacles easier to overcome. Radical changes made without careful thought can be divergent—they can create conflict with your established values and morals. If you cannot understand the reasons for altering your life, it will be difficult to build a different one.

Wilderness

The wilderness, which provides you with the space and isolation required to become completely self-sufficient, is the perfect setting for you to embark on your survivalist lifestyle. It is full of resources and opportunities, no matter which area you choose to settle in. It is only a question

of investigating your surroundings and improvising with the materials within your reach that will enable you to discover and enjoy the wealth that is at your doorstep.

The wilderness already sounds like a nice place to live, but be careful not to fall into the trap of equating it with a romantic place. Do not confuse the glory and beauty of nature with religious romanticism. It might be breathtaking and stunning to look at, but don't let the look of it fool you. The wilderness is a reckless place: it is tough and it does not show mercy. You might say it is sublime, but when the philosopher Immanuel Kant was describing nature as sublime, he was not referring to the quiet creek or the peaceful meadow. Rather, he wrote of the cascading waterfalls and the terrifying thunderstorms, those moments when man would feel overwhelmed and doubt his own superiority. Perceiving the wilderness as a wonderful, idyllic place will only leave you blind to the dangers that lurk behind its facade. When you understand the true nature of the wilderness, you will also

see certain patterns: you will notice minute differences and learn how to carefully read your surroundings. In this way, you will be able to enjoy its offerings of beauty while still paying attention to potential signs of danger.

We, as humans, have a tendency to anthropomorphize nature and animals, imposing human characteristics or emotions onto non-human organisms or phenomena. To be sure, this is a part of our social intelligence, as anthropomorphism has, for example, allowed hunters to identify empathetically with their animal prey in order to better predict their movements. But this impulse runs in conflict with our perception of our surroundings, because most of the wilderness is unpredictable or cannot be deciphered through human behavior. To be able to survive in the wilderness, it is crucial to abandon this anthropomorphizing drive. No thunderstorm or wolf will ever feel empathy for your situation and spare you. No plant or tree feels pain from your harvest or experiences moral issues with offering you its fruit. This might

sound clear and obvious to you now, but trust me, the situation will appear, maybe without you even noticing it, wherein your reaction will be delayed by a moment of personification with your prey, and before you know it, you suddenly

are

the

prey.

American Transcendentalism, a movement in philosophy and literature that flourished during the early to middle years of the nineteenth century, was also greatly influenced by this romantic outlook towards the wilderness. Transcendentalists believed that society and its institutions—particularly organized religion and political parties—ultimately corrupt the purity of the individual. They held faith that people are only at their best when they are truly “self-reliant” and independent. I can only agree with these views, as I argue for total isolation in order to obtain full self-awareness. But most major and influential proponents of this movement did not live by their own words. Instead, they tended to glorify the wilderness with a sentimental value, not

understanding or respecting its true character. If you let yourself become overwhelmed by beauty, you will turn blind to the dangers lurking behind. Don't allow yourself to become sympathetic. A well-known example is the American writer Henry David Thoreau, who wanted to physically demonstrate his transcendental beliefs. As a social experiment, he decided to move into the woods, build a cabin, become self-sufficient, and live there for two years. It might sound like a genuinely good course, perhaps even something of a Vision Quest. But what good is a life-changing decision when it already has a set expiration date? Why didn't Thoreau stay at his cabin for the remainder of his life? You could say that he was only trying to demonstrate something, but if we look at the facts, he was never isolated or self-sufficient in the real sense of the word. He lived only a few miles from town, where he regularly visited stores for supplies, welcomed visitors almost every day, and felt a constant need to communicate and explain his actions to the world. As far as being a survivor is concerned, he was a

dilettante. He used his so-called isolated life to create an image of himself as the mysterious author inspired by the wonders of nature. Mysticism for mysticism's sake. If you want to live in the wilderness, you will have to decide if you want to live the dream, or realize reality.

Looking at the wilderness in purely aesthetic terms is not just naive and banal: it is also dangerous. Allowing yourself to be seduced by the idea that the wilderness is going to bring inspiration and insightfulness will only disappoint you. The wilderness can indeed sharpen your senses and bring awareness to details, but this can only be achieved through hard work, determination, and preparation.

The right place

Usually, one of the first questions one is asked by strangers is: "Where are you from?" I don't always understand the reason why people want to know where I am from. I think there could be far more interesting first questions to ask, and if such a question truly aims to better acquaint two people with one another, how much does

where a person is from really say about her or him? I suppose some people ask this question with the hope that the person standing across from them will come from a place to which they can relate or are fascinated by, so it is a purely selfish drive to know the other's geographical origin. If the place you come from is not familiar to the person who asks, it is often followed by a generalization or stereotypical assumption as to what kind of person you might be. I have never stayed in the same spot for long enough to feel affected by this generalization or offended at having certain assumptions made about me. I prefer to change habitats now and then, and to not become too attached to one place.

You are never going to find "the perfect spot." Granted, there are a lot of places that are much better than others, but there is no single "one size fits all" kind of place. Like buying a pair of boots, the decision has as much to do with the size and shape of the foot as it does with the maker of the boots. Everyone has their personal needs and ex-

pectations, as well as their own ideas of how a retreat should be configured.

When choosing the right place for your shelter, it is important to pay attention to everything in the area. Every place has its own rhythm, patterns, and structure. Use all of your senses to evaluate the situation. Note sounds and smells, be sensitive to temperature changes, be highly observant: every little detail is going to determine how your life will transpire there. Think about the

local climate, weather circumstances, and changing seasons: are they going to impact your life and if so, how capable are you of adjusting to these changes? Always consider worst-case scenarios. If winter is going to be particularly harsh, if there are risks of hurricanes or earthquakes, how can you protect yourself from these dangers and survive?

Don't forget to observe the animals and any locals in the area. Animals are usually a great indicator of what resources are accessible or safe for you. Pay attention to which water sources they use, where they prefer to rest, which area they are feeding from. Be aware of any dangerous animals and never approach too close to their territory. Note all resources in the area and try to predict what you will need for building, making tools, food, water, protection, and so on. Then consider if any of these resources could run out and how that could affect you. It is not likely that you will find a place that has everything without any dangers attached, and still be isolated enough for you to carry out your survivalist life-



The will to power as well as the will to pleasure are substitutes for the frustrated will to meaning.



no animal will ever raise the question whether or not its existing has a meaning, but man does.

Will to Meaning, Video still, 2013

style, but being observant and thinking creatively helps. Take caution if the area is completely deserted of any living creatures: this is most likely a bad sign and you should not consider it for a more permanent stay. Even though an area might seem rough and it is impossible to imagine living there, it might have some unexpected, ultimately beneficial qualities. It can seem insurmountable to start a new life from nothing, and the work it will require from you to build everything from scratch can be overwhelming, but remember that Rome wasn't built in a day. You will not find utopia in the wilderness: utopias are not to be discovered, but to be built. When you have found your ideal habitat, you will with time learn to read the area, understand it, respect it, and admire it. But be wary of becoming too attached, as you can never know if your situation will change and force you to move away.

Shelter

Your shelter is the most important element of your survival. A life of travel can be fun and fulfilling, but in the long run it

can force you into a vulnerable position, as constant shifting from location to location leaves you more unaware of the details in your present surroundings and at risk of being surprised by sudden changes. In addition to offering protection from inclement weather and potentially dangerous animals, your shelter should provide you with a sense of well-being and a productive working atmosphere.

There are several factors you must take into consideration before building your shelter, and they have to do with the location you choose. First, consider your building materials. You should make your shelter from whatever your area can provide, both for the convenience of not having to transport it very far,



Odense, Denmark, 2012

but also to make a shelter that blends in with its surroundings and doesn't catch the attention of predators. The area has to be large and level enough for you to be able to lie down flat. You must also consider whether the site provides concealment from enemy observation: does it protect you against wild animals and rocks and dead trees that might fall, and is it free of insects, reptiles, and poisonous plants? The topography and climate of your surroundings will also affect your shelter: avoid flash flood areas in foothills, avalanches, or rockslide areas in mountainous terrain, sites near bodies of water that are below the high-water mark, or any other vital factors that will complicate your living situation and survival.

It is ideal to select a location that provides some kind of cover—rocks, trees, or other formations in the area. This will not only protect your shelter from wind and weather but will also provide camouflage. Being unnoticed is strongly advisable, as this will benefit your life and increase your chances of survival. The most common error in building a shelter is to make

it too large. A shelter must be large enough to protect you, but small enough to contain your body heat, especially in colder climates. A larger shelter is also more noticeable and will generally require more effort to maintain. When choosing the placement for your shelter, keep the word BLISS in mind:

B—Blend in with the surroundings
L—Low silhouette
I—Irregular shape
S—Small
S—Secluded location

Whatever kind of habitat you choose, it is important that it fits your needs and purpose. It should be a comfortable place, but it is first and foremost a place for working, not relaxing. That is why I will never refer to the shelter as your home. Although you live and rest there, the word “home” has too relaxing and secure a chime to it. Home is a place you go to after work; you lock the door and feel safe. But the survival shelter is a permanent working-living situation you have chosen because it is safer, easier, and self-sufficient. It is a fine balance between feeling comfortable and keep-

ing you on your toes. It should be suited for a pleasant living atmosphere but not a recreational setting that makes you feel so relaxed that you let your guard down, slack on the work you need to carry out in order to survive, and forget your main purpose. Be careful to not make your shelter too commodious: keeping it small and simple will provide a concentrated, functional atmosphere.

I always try to keep a strict division between my relaxing time (sleeping, eating, meditating) and my working time. If these two moods become too entangled, it becomes harder to concentrate and finish projects. It is not easy to achieve this balance, because you are in a perpetual survival mode: even in your relaxing time the impulse to survive is present, as it should be! But you must still try to shut your mind off, as only with proper rest can you nurture the energy required to be completely present. It is not possible to be 100 percent efficient all the time, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, but with a well-adapted schedule that gives you time to recharge your internal battery,

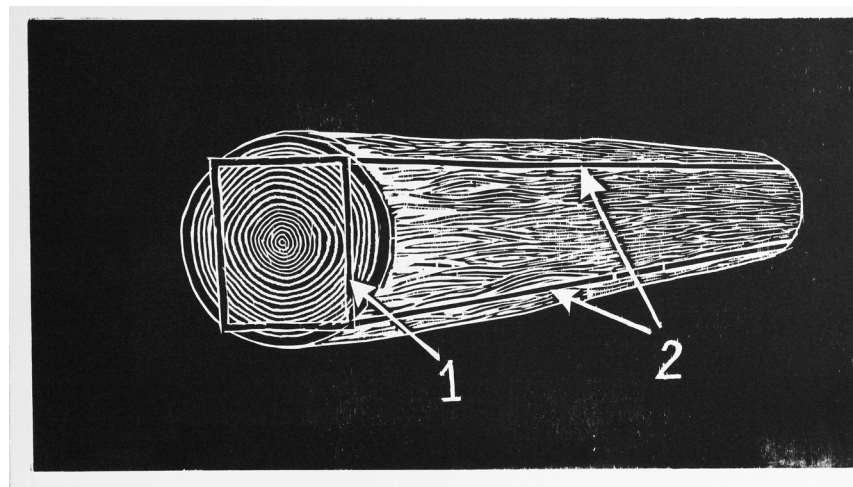
you will breeze through your working hours much more easily, efficiently, and in a far more enjoyable manner.

Once, I worked on a project that took up all of my time and energy, not only because of the project's magnitude, but also because I was incredibly determined and my mind was focused on its every little detail. I often found myself waking up in the middle of the night with a restless energy filling my body, like a shot of adrenaline after having escaped a wild beast. I could never remember what I had dreamt, but I had to get out of bed and walk around for a while before I felt relaxed enough to attempt to go to sleep. In the mornings, I felt completely exhausted, and this fatigue frustratingly continued into my working hours, affecting my concentration. Then, one night I woke up and the dream was still present in my mind: I was working on my project in the workspace, sliding my hands over the wood to feel the surface when suddenly my hands began to slide into the wood. Terrified, I tried to pull my hands back, but they were stuck and continued to sink in deeper, as if the wood was

quicksand swallowing me. Before I knew it, I was completely engulfed in the object, peering out at my workspace from within. No matter how much I tried to kick and beat my arms around, I remained trapped, slowly feeling the wood becoming firmer around me and return to its original wood texture, hard and unbendable, locking me up inside of its shape. That's when I woke up. The morning after, I decided to take a day off from the project.

We often tend to decorate our living spaces with knick-knacks and objects we associate with nostalgic memories. Be discerning in your choice of what can go into your shelter. If it doesn't have a functional use or crucial

value, leave it out. Everything in your shelter will interfere with your space and your thoughts. A clean, organized shelter is ideal for thinking and working. Moreover, if you find yourself in a situation where you have to leave quickly, you don't want to be running around looking for things or feeling regret about leaving stuff behind. Of course, your shelter should still provide a rich and inspiring space for you. You should feel that time spent in the shelter is worthwhile and enjoyable—working in your shelter should never be depressing or a burden for you. But there is a huge difference between a pleasant working space and a carefree recreational spot.



Log, woodcut on paper, 2014

I have never been a tidy person. I don't feel comfortable in totally sanitary, clean spaces, but I keep some kind of organized system to my belongings, and I always know exactly where everything is. I enjoy keeping my work and progress visible, especially since I often work on several projects simultaneously. Having them laid out in my working space allows me to move from one project to another whenever I feel like changing my routine. This also helps me if I'm stuck on one project; I can seamlessly move on to another until I find a solution and am ready to return to the first. Some people don't work well in this way; they need a clean space and empty surfaces before even getting started and have to remove everything when they are done. I suppose they find it distracting or overwhelming, and only see projects as tasks that gain value only upon completion, without regard or appreciation for the process of creating itself. I have never had issues with seeing one thing isolated from its surroundings, and can easily focus on one project without being distracted by another. It is of course always a pleasure when you finish one

work, to take it out of the project room and look at it from another angle. I often prepare myself for a fresh start by cleaning up my workspace entirely. This feels like endowing the room with potential for new things to happen. Soon, the tools start coming down again from their locations and materials will be scattered around the room. You can also spend too much time on cleaning and tidying your workspace. I have seen countless spaces where I don't believe work has taken place at all, and it leaves me wondering how much time is actually spent on work and how much is spent on getting rid of the evidence of working.

Knowing where you are
There are several methods to knowing where you are. Using the sun and the stars can help you to determine your location according to the four cardinal directions. These methods, however, will give you only a general direction. You can come up with a more accurate tracking system if you know the terrain of the territory or country. Knowing where you are will help you to understand patterns in your area, predict situations, and most im-

portantly, help you to navigate and avoid becoming lost when you are out inspecting the area for resources or simply exploring. Pay attention to prominent features, landmarks, or anything that catches your eye that you would likely notice again. Remember what you see and how that relates to where you came from and where you are going. Keep track of the route. Constantly reorient yourself.

Becoming lost in the wilderness can be a critical experience. If the fear of being lost starts to kick in, you begin to panic, make irrational and hasty decisions, and risk being hurt. Being lost makes you more vulnerable. If you don't know the area, you might be surprised by changes in the terrain, or even come into close encounters with dangerous animals or poisonous plants.

When exploring your immediate environment, try to adhere to a simple walking route or plan for the expedition. Walk in a circle around the location of your shelter, and use the sun to determine when you've made a full circle and then try to find

your way back to the shelter, stretching out further and wider the next time. Another strategy could be to simply try to maintain a straight route out away from your shelter, again using the sun to keep track of your direction, and follow the same way back. These exercises will help you get a better sense of the area and lower the risk of becoming lost. If you just take off walking in a zigzag pattern, going wherever your curiosity takes you or where it seems easiest to walk, you will not only more easily lose track of your route, but you might also overlook areas with valuable resources. When you feel confident within your area and have a sound understanding of the entire terrain, then you can knowingly take more adventurous walks. However, every move you make should have a purpose.

If you have to make a longer expedition further away from your main area, I would advise that you leave small marks, traces that only you will recognize but which are still noticeable enough so that you may easily find your way back.

If, despite this advice, you become lost and find that it is impossible to find your way back on your own, then try signaling for help. Perhaps it is vital that you are found: maybe you are hurt and cannot continue, or you are so disoriented that you feel it would only worsen your situation to keep moving. Find an open field where you can easily be spotted, and either build a fire to signal with smoke, or form rocks or other objects in your area into a non-natural shape—geometric patterns such as straight lines, circles, triangles, or Xs big enough to be noticed from above. If you have any shiny objects on you, preferably a mirror, you can reflect light to flash signals. These can usually be seen from far away if you reflect a strong enough sunbeam from the right angle.

If you find yourself in an inhabited area, it is always a good idea to pay attention the natives. By studying the people, you will learn to respect them, likely make valuable friends, and, most important of all, you will learn how to adapt to their environment and therefore increase your chances of survival. If you find

yourself in a friendly area, one way to establish a rapport with the natives is to demonstrate an interest in their tools and how they obtain food and water. Asking for help and advice is fine, but I would always suggest you try to come up with solutions yourself. Not only will you attain



Big Sky, Montana, USA, 2010

a better understanding of the problem and how to solve it as a result, but doing so also helps your ability to improvise. It is good exercise for the brain, and who knows, maybe you will even figure out an even better solution than what somebody might have suggested to you. The whole idea behind the survivalist lifestyle is to be self-dependent and self-sufficient, so always try to make it work without involving others.

Moving locations

You might run into a situation where you will be forced to move locations. Sometimes this can happen suddenly, forcing you to make a quick decision and prepare your departure as fast as possible. This is also why it is ideal to have an organized shelter, to provide you with a good overview of what you have and what is crucial for you to take with you. I strongly advise to always have a bug-out-bag ready in your shelter, in the event that you might have to make a immediate escape with no time to consider or gather your belongings. You should also have a plan B and C ready in such cases. These could entail a smaller alternative shelter located within not too far of a reach that is already set up to function as an emergency habitat, or a pre-selected place further away that could work as a new shelter location. You would have to know exactly where these places are and what you'd need to be able to find them in the dark. Remember, you might be in a stressful situation when you are headed there, with no time to navigate or pause to pay attention to details around you.

When you are on the move, you need to move fast and quietly. Being on the move always catapults you into a more vulnerable position. You are easier affected by wind and weather; you could get ill, hurt, and be too far away from a place where you can seek cover and regain your strength. You are more easily spotted when moving, and you might have to enter unknown areas, thus increasing your risk of making mistakes. Carrying as few items as possible is optimal. Be light, be quick, and be covert in your actions. This is not a problem if you are already accustomed to such a pace and have had previous practice in moving locations over far distances. You will remember how heavy that bag was, how complicated it made your travels, and how many useless items you brought with you that you in fact didn't need. Nothing is so important that it can't be replaced. Never jeopardize your own safety and comfort for objects and items that are not crucial for your survival.

It is expected that you will have to move a lot in the wilderness. This has both positive and

negative aspects. On the downside, finding a new location will always require more energy, as will becoming used to your new surroundings. But remember that everything you learn can be useful in other situations, and in time you will find that moving locations becomes easier and easier, allowing you to adapt to your new area with less effort. Having to leave behind any friends or relatives can also complicate your decision, but long distances should not alter a true friendship. If any good connections are lost because of separation caused by miles-long stretches, the friendship was not worth keeping anyways. On a more positive note, moving around is going to make you more experienced. You will not only learn about different environments and their significance, but also reach a better overall understanding of people, connections, actions, and reactions. This knowledge might not be obvious to you right away, but in the long run you will see that it makes you more adaptable to unforeseen situations.

I suppose most people have experienced a feeling of home-

sickness at least once in their lifetime. As children, we longed to return to our mothers after a weekend trip, though we might not have admitted this at the time. In the wilderness, you will often be faced with a kind of homesickness, the yearning to come back to a secure, well-known place, to feel protected and supported. You are, after all, in a stressful, uncertain, and unprotected environment without anybody to rely on. Giving up and returning to a familiar society that systematizes and regulates your actions may hence be appealing in moments of stress. In these situations, just take a moment to remember all of your reasons for leaving in the first place, and list all of the positive experiences and assets that the wilderness has provided you with thus far. You might want one or two days back in your old life, but is that really where you want to be for the rest of your days? Would you prefer to live a life that protects you or a life that challenges you?

Resources

There is a saying in survivalism: “The more you know, the less you need.” After having

chosen an area to settle in, it is important that you spend your time and energy trying to define everything within the area. This entails figuring out your resources for food, building materials, tools, and other necessities. Name and list everything, categorize them into systems so that you don’t forget anything and it becomes easy for you to amass a clear oversight on what is within your reach. It is good to gather materials, but be careful not to clutter up your shelter. If you come across something that is not immediately necessary, then leave it where it is and just take note of exactly where you can find it in the future and what potential uses it might hold. This of course does not apply to food sources that might go bad or be eaten by others. It could also be an extraordinary find that you know could be destroyed or of interest to others. If this is the case, you will have to determine how important this resource is compared to the space it is going to take up in your shelter and the effort it will require for you to carry it back with you.

When considering your resources, it is also imperative to observe the local population and animals

of the area. They probably have more experience on what is useful and edible. If there is something they don’t touch or use at all, you, too, should be cautious of it. Be creative with whatever you can find, think about all of its possible uses and alternative methods of handling it. You might uncover some unexpected options and this could also lead to a better understanding of your already existing resources. It’s all about exploring the qualities of the material in your hands, getting to know its strengths and weaknesses. While you will already be familiar with most resources, you might only relate to their conventional uses. Try to forget this knowledge and look at the object before you as if it were yet undiscovered, and reinvent its function, handling, and treatment. Of course, your priority should be to focus on more immediate needs, but when this is taken care of, explore!

Gathering resources can take a lot of time and effort, so don’t be lazy about it. Something that might be far away from your shelter and too heavy to carry could ultimately be your most valuable resource.

I sometimes fall into the trap of gathering too many things around me. Some say this is a habit from being the youngest child and not wanting to let go of anything in case someone will take it from you. I usually have an idea for what I will use my materials for, but if plans change, I still have a hard time discarding the material. If I come across something that seems like a good find or something I might not get my hands on again very easily, I usually don't question its purpose or if it is necessary to keep. I will store it somewhere in case I come up with a good reason in the future. Often, this benefits my practice, as seeing materials lying around engages me to start thinking about different ways of using it. This can trigger new exciting projects in addition to opening up ways of thinking alternative solutions to existing problems. But I also have rules for how long I will hold onto these materials without using them. I am always cautious of merely piling up and hoarding useless materials in my workspace.

Tools

It is crucial that you have the necessary tools and equipment

to survive. Certain tools hold more obvious basic needs, such as rope, duct tape, knives, pencils, and so forth. But you will also have to think about tools for your ongoing working practice. Maintaining your shelter and making tools for your basic survival will not fill up your entire day, so at some point you will have to incorporate into your schedule new building activities. For this, you will need certain tools and materials. In our society, we have become accustomed to going out and purchasing tools for a specific job or simply hiring somebody in order to get things done. This habit prevents us from trying to come up with solutions ourselves and prevents us from practicing basic problem-solving. In the wilderness, you will be forced to find your own solutions and develop your own tools for fixing what is around you. In the beginning you might find this very difficult and be frustrated about your lack of materials or knowledge. But in time you will find that your mind adapts more quickly to thinking creatively with what you have and your experience from previous projects can be

repurposed in the most unexpected ways. Being able to solve your own problems and inventing your own tools will give you a great feeling of independence. Most of us already have difficulties asking others for help. We might feel like we are exploiting our contacts and creating an unequal balance if we can't contribute anything in return, though somehow this feeling doesn't seem to apply to us when we are paying for a service. But by paying to get the job done, you miss out on the sincere feeling of joy that accompanies creating something yourself.

In my experience as a survivalist, I have been surprised to hear remarks on my ability to handle tools and building objects, as if the fact that I'm a woman should somehow impede my ability to be independent. I am not sure I can follow this logic, but I assume it is based on the myth that women are the weaker gender and therefore should conserve their energy and obtain help in the form of a man. Perhaps this is also based on the twisted assumption that women find pleasure in being waited on and not having to expend energy on solving problems on their own. Due

to some of these stereotypical generalizations regarding gender roles, I have often been asked if my choice of a survivalist lifestyle was a political statement, a feminist provocation. To this I can only answer that there is no question as to whether I am both a woman and a survivalist, but I am not one because of the other or despite the other. The feeling of being independent and self-sufficient does not change according to one's gender, as the importance of being able to survive is equally necessary and beneficial for all people. I suppose you could say that being a woman and being confronted with these accusations and generalizations regarding our abilities or lack thereof can make the survivalist lifestyle even more urgent—to prove the contrary, not to your surroundings, but for the sake of your own self-awareness.

Stop, Plan, Execute, Assess, & Re-evaluate

When deciding how to approach creating your tools, keep their purpose in mind. What are you trying to build or achieve, and what is needed to make this possible? Imagine the progress of the project's entirety, step by step. What is the main reason

for your project and what do you wish to gain from? How do you imagine it should be carried out? First and foremost, be the engineer of your project and imagine all of the necessary or ideal materials required to bring it into fruition. At this stage, you shouldn't be too concerned about what is actually possible or what materials you have within your reach—just think about the simplest way of handling the problem. Once you've thought this through, you can start mapping out the details.

Being inexperienced in improvisation can be your enemy in a survival situation, so it is key that you learn to improvise.

Take a tool designed for a specific purpose and see how many other uses you can distill from it. If you need a certain tool that is not accessible, how can you create this tool or something like it with the resources at your disposal?

Ensure that enough time, energy, and care goes into the artistic construction of each survival tool to guarantee that tool's efficacy. By putting care into what you build, it becomes

a work of art while at the same time maintaining its practical value. Learn to use natural objects around you; an example might be to use a rock for a hammer. No matter how complete a survival kit you carry with you, it will run out or wear down after some time. This is when your imagination must take over. If you already have some tools, practice by using them more innovatively. Think about its original purpose—maybe its shaft can hold something up, maybe its head can be used as weight, or maybe it is appropriately sized or angled to fit into something else. Experiment and research.

I take one rock and balance it on another—it has to be steady. I will then tie this branch to a tree over there. It has to be bound tightly, it shouldn't be able to move; if it does, I find another branch for support. Then I carefully place a thin piece of rubber on the two stones before wrapping them in leather—the piece of rubber should be visible through the leather. I find a third rock and make one firm knock directly on the rubber. Then I put them in a bucket of saltwater for

three days. As soon as I see salt crystals beginning to form on the surface, I take the rocks out of the leather wrapping and pour the water out on the bottom of the tree. If the branches move, I start over.

If you find yourself experiencing physical difficulties performing a task—maybe the job seems too big, too heavy for you to manage—don't give up. Think about alternative ways of achieving your goal. Perhaps you can construct some kind of weight balance that could help your lifting, or maybe your material doesn't have to be used in full and can instead be applied one piece at a time.

Too often we look at ourselves from a distorted perspective and are quick to impose denigrating labels, imagining we have various skill deficits or disabilities. In the wilderness, you will have to be the hunter, the doctor, the engineer, the philosopher, and the inventor, as well as the artist. A lack of skills is only in your head and in your lack of practice and knowledge. Most things can be learned or acquired through training, investigation, and experimentation—perhaps not to

perfection, but with time, at least to serve your immediate needs. No research or practice is ever wasted even if your experiments fail according to your original plans or expectations, because you still learned something from the process and amassed more knowledge and experience for your next attempt.

Self-discipline

A new element of your wilderness life is your total independence. This is something most people often dream about but surprisingly few actually make a realistic effort to achieve. Being in total control of your life may at first sound like a very fulfilling prospect, but the way society has been built has also led us to



Fort Eben-Emael, Belgium, 2014

believe that labor is a necessity—not an enjoyable thing, but something we have to do in order to maintain our lifestyle, as if we were working slaves who live at the mercy of the system. In some societies, we have adapted ourselves to this mindset so much so that being extremely busy all the time has morphed into a odd symbol of success. This has fostered an ambiguous relation to the way we talk about our work: for example, we like to point out to friends and family how busy and stressed we are in order to give an impression of how successful we are, but we do so always in a tone that suggests that being busy is a negative thing. This is also reflected in the negative reactions, body language, and tones of voice of people who don't contribute to such an ideology, but on the contrary, are committed to a balanced work/life rhythm with plenty of time for reflection. Consequently, such people are looked down upon as lazy, non-contributing, selfish non-achievers. If being so busy doesn't feel good, then why do we still tend to regard it as an exemplary state? And why don't we try to change this?

I assume that this is due to a combination of being used to obeying orders, having to please others through our individual efforts, and trying to polish our self-esteem by appearing so busy that it seems like we are achieving a lot.

As a survivalist, you will not need to obey anyone's orders or social systems. No one will judge you for being lazy or stressed out. This might sound like an ideal situation, but since society has impacted us so much, our immediate reaction is one of feeling useless and dispensable. If we aren't required to please anybody, we tend to slide into a coma-like condition where nothing seems important enough to get us going. So, when you embark on your survivalist life, it is important to be aware of not falling into this inactive and depressive trap. You will have to work on your self-discipline and keep yourself busy with projects. Hard labor can actually be very fulfilling and satisfying, especially when you know that it is being carried out because of your decision to do it, and not to appease others.

In the beginning, you might find it liberating to do what you want, whenever you want it and according to your own pace, but in the long run, it is not easy to keep yourself busy when there is no one around to tell you what to do, reasons for why you should do it, or the outcome of a long day's work. In the wilderness, there is no right or wrong, no guidelines for how to conduct your projects, and no textbook to follow that tells you whether the results are satisfactory.

Life in the wilderness is hard-pressed. You might have a romantic vision of it and picture yourself surrounded by inspiration in a quiet place. Perhaps you see yourself lying in the grass, looking at the sky, or sitting and concentrating on a little woodcarving for hours. However, this is not the reality. Living in the wilderness must be approached from a professional, not recreational, point of view. There will be many tasks to attend to just in order to fulfill your basic needs. Even if they are minuscule tasks, repairs, or adjustments, never postpone anything, because you never know when the wilderness will

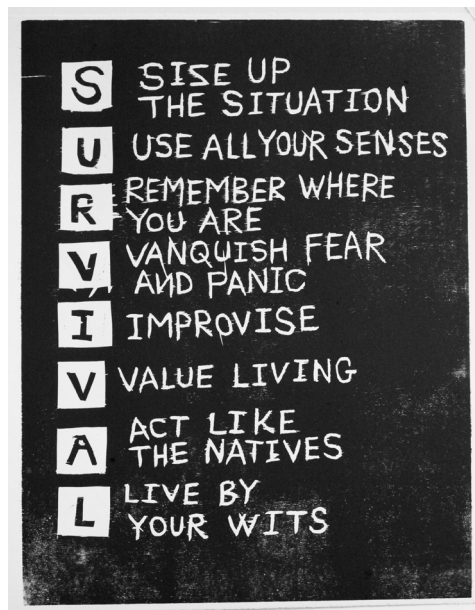
surprise you and unload a big problem on you. There are a lot of practicalities connected to a wilderness lifestyle, and they are not all enjoyable, but if you are good at managing your time and consistent about attending to these issues, you will find a good work rhythm that allows you to incorporate more pleasant projects into your routine.

Some days you will find that there may not be any obvious projects you should be working on. In these situations, it is important that you keep pushing yourself anyway. Though some projects might seem useless or a waste of time, they all enrich your understanding of how to work. Even the smallest experiments with random materials or resources will give you not only experience, but also fill up your day with a meaningful rhythm. One of the biggest reasons why people become stuck on projects or never even start is their own self-doubt. We are our own biggest critics; often, we prevent ourselves from developing our craft simply because we ask too many critical questions, second-guessing our intentions as to why we embarked on that

particular idea or project. This is a useful skill if we are in a survival situation, where time is short and our energy levels low, but more often than not, this attitude only prohibits us from exploring our potential. In the worst of cases, this self-doubting inner voice takes over completely and prevents you from performing at all. If you find it difficult to start on a project, it helps to turn to something completely different for a while. Take a walk, gather some materials, read, or do something else that doesn't require significant mental energy. Maybe you need to start out with smaller tasks, something simple. Look at it as a smaller assignment you need to complete in order to understand the more complicated process of the larger project.

Scheduling your day and establishing routines will also help you to get into an appropriate working rhythm. Committing to too many projects can be overwhelming and can lead you to slide into a paralyzed condition where you cannot face obligations or even fathom where to start. A structured day helps you to organize and focus

on one thing at a time. If you don't finish today, not to worry: tomorrow is another day. Another good kick-starter is to set rules. Try to conceptualize your experiments and make rules for how to work. For example, try collecting ten different objects within your area and categorize them into systems based on their color, size, or weight. Set a time limit to your task: how many stones can you carry from one spot to another in one hour, and could you do it faster another way? Count things—steps, leaves, or words. Place limits for yourself—you



Survival, woodcut on paper?, 2014

can't use wood today, you can only work with your left hand or are only allowed to use black material. This may seem counterproductive, since the whole idea of the survivalist lifestyle is to abandon systems, regulations, and rules with the aim of achieving total independence, but these methods will help you to create a more structured day, which will ultimately benefit your ability to understand the processes and logic behind your own projects. Approach your practice as if you were a chemist: in order to stage a particular reaction, you can't just start pouring random liquids together. You would instead try out all of the options, note all of the results meticulously, and pay keen attention to all influences that could affect the experiment, maintaining your focus throughout. There are no failures; all outcomes are equally important. Remember that although there might be rules and systems, it is you who makes and controls them, and it is only you they benefit!

Rigorous self-discipline and structure not only improve your working process but endow you with mental clarity. If you

structure your days well, you can ration your time and save energy for other tasks, so that you can concentrate on other projects beyond basic practicalities. It will also improve your ability to handle a possibly dangerous or stressful situation that demands lucid thinking and quick reaction. Life in the wilderness can be extremely stressful, and the better you are at organizing, structuring, and managing your time, the better you are fit for survival. Some people are naturally very self-disciplined, but they, too, can continually strive for improvement. There are many different ways of exercising self-control. Some might exhibit a strong willpower when it comes to physical challenges, but be completely stunted on an emotional level. Others might be extremely self-aware and mentally resourceful when handling an emotionally traumatic experience, but when it comes to physical challenges, they might resign as soon as they face resistance. Self-control is mainly about being calm and reflective, maintaining awareness of your surroundings and external influences. You can train yourself by always being level-headed,

staying active, and planning every move.

Animals

Being in nature implies encountering nature in all its ways. Urban life doesn't prepare us for encounters with the unpredictable creatures of the wild. Hence, I feel it necessary to delegate a special section to this topic.

The biggest issue modern culture has with animals is that it tends to romanticize and anthropomorphize them, forgetting that these creatures have no moral or ethical feeling toward us or any other living being. Animals are driven by instinct and an innate drive to survive. We could learn a lot from looking at animal behavior, and even benefit from the "survival of the fittest" mode that is much more central in animal life than in humans. Indeed, if the goal is to survive, one must remain immune to irrational feelings. Some animals live in packs, some have mates, and others choose a solitary lifestyle where they only interact with their species for mating purposes.

All three ways of life have their pros and cons, and humans seem to be able to adapt to all three ways, depending on which is best suited for one's personality.

Packs

Living in packs has an obvious advantage in that it secures the protection of the group. Most mammals live in packs because the pack can protect them from attacks by predators. Since the predator only goes after one prey, it will always choose to go after the weakest of the pack.



West Yellowstone, Montana, USA, 2011

That the weakest link is naturally ranked out in this way also benefits the future survival of the pack. But since humans are predators themselves, and only few predators will attack

a pack of humans, the pack mentality doesn't really apply to us. The downside of belonging to a pack is that you are more likely to be spotted by predators. When humans gather in a flock, they make noise, take up a lot of space, and require many more resources to maintain the well-being of the entire group.

Some predators also live in packs. For the predator, the pack provides a more sufficient hunt. One coyote will never be able to hunt down a full-grown elk, but a group of coyotes can slowly surround the elk and close in for an attack, eventually killing a prey that can feed the whole pack and thereby secure the survival of the entire group. The downside of such an approach is that it requires one to be dependent on the group and only develop skills for hunting in a pack and not as a solo hunter. In other words, if the group doesn't succeed, you won't survive either. The other downside to the predator pack is that it is always ruled by alpha-males. If you are not naturally born as an alpha-male, you will most likely not receive enough food, be pushed out, or eventually starve to death or be hunted by the pack.

Monogamy

Social monogamy varies across species. It is common knowledge that most birds engage in social monogamy whereas it is more unusual in mammals. This has nothing to do with emotional attachment or lack thereof; on the contrary, animals mate because of instinct and are driven by the general survival of their species. The choice of partner results from mate guarding and sexual conflicts and is entirely dependent on reproduction results, and, unlike humans, is not based on any emotional or sexual attraction. While social monogamy leads to some sort of longer attachment between two birds, there are in fact many bird species that are polygamous and will mate with several partners during one nesting season.

Reproducing with the same partner with whom you succeeded last mating season is a fairly common evolutionary tactic. The offspring of animals are in a much bigger risk than human offspring, so animals will have to reproduce every mating season in order to secure the survival of their species. For humans, who nowadays don't face any

major dangers like losing their children and statistically only produce 1 to 3 offspring throughout a 60- to 80-year-long lifespan, it is hard to see the benefits of social monogamy. Having a partner on whom you can rely and share your emotional distress with, however, can be rewarding and helps you to avoid psychological stress, maintain clear thinking, and focus on the main purpose: survival.

a) First couple a balance-swing, Lead right out to the right of the ring

b) With a birdie in a cage And three hands round.

c) The bird hop out and the crow hop in.

d) The crow hop out and circle again.

e) Docey-doe with the gent you know. Ladies go si and the gents go do

f) On to the next -

Total isolation

Humans are emotional creatures that distinguish themselves from other animals in many ways, and this is perhaps most evident in our irrational attachment to one another,

the physical and emotional contact required by most of us in order to maintain a stable, functioning lifestyle. The answer to why this attachment is necessary can probably be found in our development as a race that started thinking in more future-oriented terms as opposed to remaining purely instinct-driven. No animal holds the capability of understanding a sense of time. Animals have no idea that in a few months' time, it will be winter and cold. Squirrels gather nuts for the winter because of a neurological impulse that alerts them to gather food when light is abundant and food resources high. They have no idea why they are hoarding nuts—it is simply their instinct to do so. A dog is sad when you leave for your day job, but it has no sense of time, of when you are coming back. The dog might become used to routines, but it still has no sense of what the next week or two years will hold. Unfortunately, this is both a gift and a curse that afflicts humans as well. Although we have the ability to imagine tomorrow, our brains do not anticipate ordinary scenarios from everyday life; rather, we tend to

think in terms of worst- and best-case scenarios when it comes to long-term predicting.

For this reason, it is hard for us to predict the positive aspects to a solitary life in the unknown wilderness, and to most people, this way of living will at first sight seem unbearable. Centuries of sociocultural traditions dictate that monogamy, a steady home with children, and a full-time job with a reliable income are the only reasonable paths towards attaining a “happy” lifestyle. Of course, there are also plenty of downsides to choosing a totally solitary lifestyle. As mentioned before, it seems that having somebody to intellectually and physically challenge you nurtures a healthy state of mind. On a more obvious note, it is better to have a second thought on situations and problem solving—two minds always think better than one. And in case something goes terribly wrong (you become hurt, ill, or in other ways incapable of performing a crucial task), you hopefully have another person to rely on to help you, nursing and gathering food supplies while you are recovering. I cannot tell you what lifestyle will be best suited

for you to survive the wilderness, but I will say this: think carefully when choosing your set-up and don't let cultural or emotional disruptions clutter your mind.

When encountering an animal Regardless of what area you choose to settle down in, as a wilderness survivor, you must study the wildlife of the area so that you will become familiar with the plants and creatures surrounding you. Although I cannot speak on behalf of all of the vastly different ecosystems across the world, there are still a few basic rules that I would think apply as global knowledge.

Your state of mind while wandering and navigating the wilderness should of course differ from your purpose. I always recommend that you in any case carry a defense weapon, but if you are just out looking for firewood, materials, or food sources, you might not always be on the alert for animal attacks or tracking movements in the bushes. If you are on a hunt, your attention is on a whole different level—you want to move quietly and up against the wind. In these situations, always be on lookout that something else could be right

behind you, hunting you! Your ears and eyes have to be highly aware of any changes in your surroundings and your reflexes ready to react on very short notice. Also bear in mind less visible dangers: snakes hiding in tall grass and poisonous spiders have killed more people than bears and wolves! If you are just exploring your area and not hunting, I strongly recommend carrying something on you that emits a non-natural sound as you walk: bells, whistles, or the like. Most predators will not attack humans unless they are starving or feel threatened, and unfamiliar sounds usually just scare them away. Taking big, heavy steps will also scare away snakes, as they will try to avoid the vibrations on the ground. No matter what, never ever let your guard down on your wilderness walks and always be aware of everything around you.

If you should still be so unlucky as to encounter a predator, remain calm. First, try to identify the animal; if you've already studied your local environment, this should be fairly simple. Secondly, has the animal spotted you as well? If not, slowly

retreat backwards as quietly and calmly as possible. Finally, what state does the animal appear to be in? Is it relaxed, having just noticed you, or does the animal appear to be afraid, angry, or threatened? In most of these situations, your judgment rests on a split second, so observe, assess, and react!

Running is definitely not your first option, as many animals will immediately respond to any accelerated motion with their hunting reflex. Never start running, unless it seems like your last life-saving option. Observing the animals in your area can also provide you with clues on how to survive. Animals, too, require food, water, and shelter. But be aware that some plants that function as a food source for animals can be toxic for humans. So, don't rely solely on observations, also use your knowledge and senses.

Animals are much more in tune with their senses than humans are; they hear and smell things long before you will notice it, so pay close attention to their reactions. A deer fleeing in front of you could be your rescue from

the wolf or bear lurking in the distance!

Stress

Some people have trouble operating in settings where everything is not clear-cut. The only guarantee in a survival situation is that nothing is guaranteed. It can be extremely stressful to operate on little information in a setting where you have limited control over your surroundings. Stress is the body's natural reaction to pressure. It can occur when we are facing any kind of physical, mental, emotional, or spiritual tension. Stress actually has many positive sides to it. When we become stressed, our body knows that we are facing a situation that demands of us extra energy and higher alertness, and as a result, it releases stored fuels (sugar and fat) to provide quick energy. Our breathing rate also increases to supply more oxygen to the blood; heart rate and blood pressure rise to provide more blood to the muscles; and senses become more acute (hearing becomes more sensitive, pupils become larger, smell becomes sharper). In short, the body does everything it can to make us

more aware of our surroundings and be ready to react to protect ourselves from potential dangers. A person cannot maintain such levels of alertness indefinitely, however. Too much stress leads to distress, and distress causes an uncomfortable tension that leads to sickness, both mentally and physically. Illness and injury can also add to stress by limiting your ability to maneuver, gather food and drink, find shelter, and defend yourself. Even if illness and injury don't directly lead to death, they compound pre-existing stress through the pain and discomfort they generate. It is only by gaining control over the stress associated with the vulnerability to injury, illness, and death that a survivalist can build



Virginia City, Montana, USA, 2011

the courage to take on the risks associated with survival tasks.

Positive forms of stress, also called “eustress,” aid people to cope with a given situation in a much more efficient way, motivating them to perform at their maximum efficiency. So you see, stress can be either a constructive or destructive force. The key to survival is your ability to manage the inevitable stress you will encounter.

Lack of control and uncertainty can be major stress-inducing factors in the wilderness. Most of us are raised in a society that provides us with a hierarchy, where somebody always is there to tell us what is right and wrong, or explain to us how things are done. Some people have trouble operating in settings where there are no clear ground rules and nothing is guaranteed. In the wilderness, you can only depend on yourself, which means that every choice can be a potentially fatal choice. Earlier I described the importance of structuring your days and establishing self-discipline, since these habits are valuable tools for overcoming or avoiding stress altogether. But stress can

still occur in many forms and for many different reasons.

The effects of stress on people vary from person to person and are dependent on the individual’s personality and temperament. While I cannot offer advice on how to avoid stress, or predict how a specific stress will affect any given person, there are ways of managing difficult situations. In this regard, learning to recognize signals of oncoming stress is crucial.

Stress usually occurs when there are too many factors that demand our attention simultaneously. The stressor could be an emotional, mental, or physical agent, or even worse, a mixture of all of these at once. Some people are adept at dealing with certain issues better than others, but sometimes the pile on your plate reaches so high that it begins to interfere with your ability to concentrate on one thing at a time. When confronted with such an overwhelming situation, we tend to think of it as a singular problem as opposed to a set of smaller issues that can be resolved step by step. In such instances, you should pause and remember that you are experienc-

ing the symptoms of stress.

In today’s society we tend to exaggerate and throw around the word “stress” whenever we are occupied with something, in a seemingly strategic way not unlike the desire to demonstrate to others that we are successful people by virtue of how busy we are. Stress is not something worth aspiring to; although it can be positive in situations of immediate danger, prolonged exposure to stress will slow you down and gradually devastate you. If you don’t react to the symptoms of stress and try to change them, you will only hurt yourself. And there is nothing heroic about a beaten-down, stressed out survivalist. To avoid stress, you have to step back and carefully reflect on your situation. What is it that is causing you so much worry? Try to approach each problem separately. Often you will find that individual problems in themselves are not that big or overwhelming, but rather your own expectations of how to handle them are the culprit of your difficulty in resolving issues. You can, however, learn how to manage your own expectations. Remember that it is only you who makes the judgment, and though you might be your own worst critic, it is only

you who decides what is ultimately important and what you want to gain. It may sound all too easy, but sometimes all you need to do to overcome or alleviate stress is to lower your expectations of yourself. It is fine to be ambitious and to strive for big dreams or goals, but you cannot force them, nor is it always the final result of your achievement that is most interesting or integral to self-growth. The process of completing a project, the failures involved, and all of the experience you will gain along the way renders your initial effort worthy in and of itself. In time, you will experience that some of the most enjoyable projects with the most fulfilling results are those that have occurred seemingly naturally and unforced. By this, I do not mean to suggest that you should always look for an easy way out or not put in the required effort into everything you do. But if you stay true to what feels right, journey with spontaneity, and just follow your innate kind of work, you will most likely stumble upon fascinating results. In the end, it is more about being persistent and working freely rather than allowing negative thoughts or fears restrain your imagination.

Anxiety

It is normal to feel afraid; fear is a healthy, natural response to a dangerous situation, encouraging us to be alert, take action, or at least focus on the source of threat. But when fear becomes so overwhelming that it prevents us from taking any actions, paralyzing us, we become anxious. The hormonal changes experienced during the puberty years reduce our anxiety levels in order to push our bodies and test our limits, and we feel rewarded by the rush of adrenaline. This is how we learn about our own strengths and powers as well as the limits and consequences of being too daring. Anxiety becomes much more pronounced later on in our lives and often stops us from exploring extreme situations. In a survival setting, you can reduce your anxiety levels by performing those tasks that will ensure that you come out of the ordeal alive, learning to control your fears and carefully assessing dangers along the way. The greatest enemies in a survival situation are fear and panic. If uncontrolled, they can destroy your ability to make rational decisions. They may cause you to react to your

feelings and imagination rather than the concrete reality before you. They can be immensely draining and incite further negative thinking. Attempting to survive on your own while keeping an optimistic outlook is a stressful task in and of itself. It is easy to slink into self-doubt and begin questioning your reasons and motivation for survival. We don't often notice how much we depend on other people for guidance and approval in our everyday lives, although we are always unconsciously trying to conform to some kind of moral or ethical rule. When you are completely independent and can rely only on yourself, when you have no one else to please or obey, your identity will no longer matter. Whereas previously your personality was defined solely in relationship to others, survival forces you to truly face yourself. This can be difficult to accept—that you are dispensable to everyone else, and that your current path only leaves you with potentially fatal choices of your own device. When reflecting on this, it is important to not lose confidence in yourself and your worth as a person. Suicidal thoughts may even appear, and they will re-

quire strong psychological effort to be kept at bay.

A common human flaw is that we tend to believe that we all are put on Earth with a certain purpose or destiny to fulfill. When depressive thoughts surface, they are often linked to a feeling of meaninglessness, that what we do and think are not important at all. Animals don't share this understanding of life—they only care about surviving. This foremost instinct prevents them from questioning or doubting whether their lives are meaning-



Montana, USA, 2011

ful, whereas humans consistently do. This is our burden, our neuroses that we have to deal with. Surely, having been put in this world with a set of moral and ethical standards makes us reflect on our behavior and actions more carefully. It is healthy

to philosophize about life, but be aware of the direction your thoughts are taking you. Some people are simply born into an impossibly dark cloud—they cannot break out of it and will need professional help in the form of medication or therapy, or more brutally, they must simply learn how to live with their sadness. Although such a predisposition may seem like a handicap, I have met many people who, despite their circumstances, were still able to live in the wilderness. In fact, for many of them, living in the wilderness had an overall positive impact on their mental health. Having been immersed in a simpler life with fewer hierarchies and social protocols to follow, they found themselves less concerned about their lives' "meaning" or whether they could live up to certain societal norms. For others, it is precisely the lack of such rules and standards that make it difficult to cope with their emotions and actions in the wilderness.

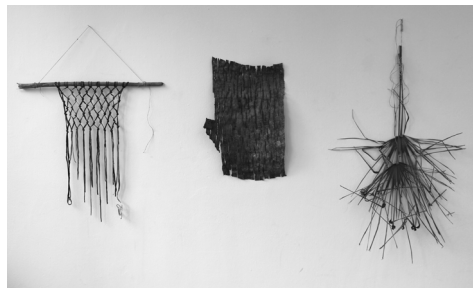
Whenever I have experienced anxiety or stress, I've always tried to snap out of it. This might appear easier said than done, especially when stress can leave you completely dys-

functional, thus preventing you from attending to whatever it is that is causing you stress. But often it helps to just look away, to focus on something entirely different. Taking a long walk, cleaning up my space, or engaging in another simple activity that doesn't require much mental energy helps to clear my mind and calms me down. Doing so also revitalizes my perspective, allowing me to see things differently, perhaps more objectively or rationally. And before I know it, I am less anxious or stressed, or these feelings vanish altogether.

Anxiety and stress are closely related to fear. Fear is a natural emotional response to any dangerous situation, and the danger doesn't have to be physical in the sense that it could hurt or kill you. You can also fear your own mind, your emotional and mental well-being, or perhaps you fear the future. Fear releases the hormone adrenaline, and like stress, it can mobilize us to take action in dangerous situations. But fear can also paralyze us completely, rendering us incapable of performing the simplest of tasks. Through

physical and mental preparation, however, you can acquire the knowledge and techniques to increase your confidence, maintain good judgment, and manage your fears.

It is no question that the wilderness will test your strength and make you doubt your ability to perform. There are many situations that will easily make



Maastricht, Holland, 2015

you angry or scared: becoming lost, inclement weather, losing equipment, or the physical limitations you will face are just a few of the sources that will cause you frustration. Frustration is a dangerous emotional state to be in, since you are more likely to make hasty decisions, move quicker, and act carelessly during a bout of frustration. These poorly thought-out, impulsive actions will cause you more damage and leave you

feeling even more resigned. The "I quit" attitude is often easier for people to handle when they are facing obstacles that riddle them with self-doubt, because it makes them feel as if they still retain some power to make decisions—the decision to quit. In the wilderness, this will not always be an option. You can't avoid your problems by handing them over to someone else or by wasting your energy on these sudden outbursts of anger or frustration. You will have to learn how to channel your feelings of anger productively and calmly look at the problem from another angle.

Be aware when anger begins to rise in you; don't allow it to take over and bend you towards self-destructive actions. Take a deep breath and try to stay focused on the goal. If you fail at this the first time, then step back, look at the situation again, analyze your mistake, and try to fix it. Don't let a quitting attitude tell you that you are incapable or mentally or physically insufficient; tap into your reservoir of knowledge and seek out a solution. Anger and frustration are a waste of energy and can only be useful in situations of direct combat.

Boredom

Loneliness and boredom, too, can give way to feelings of frustration and anxiety. This might sound absurd in the context of a life of constant adaptation and survival, but you will certainly experience a kind of boredom and loneliness in the wild. However, it won't be the boredom you might feel on a Sunday afternoon when none of your friends are up for going to the movies. It will manifest itself as a kind of fatigue generated from being confronted with the same situation—the same surroundings, same experiences, or repetitive projects—day after day. This doesn't mean that you are bored because you have nothing to do—there are always things to attend to in wilderness—but being in the same situation for a prolonged period of time can be draining and lead you to crave the excitement that accompanies a change of setting. Feelings of loneliness are natural and they are often amplified in the wilderness. Having some social connections within your reach doesn't make you immune to feelings of loneliness, since your loneliness is more a reflection of being alone in your ideology and lifestyle. It is only logical that

such feelings should surface, as human beings are socially dependent creatures both in terms of desiring physical contact, where we enjoy conversations and the company of others, and the need to belong to a group—to be related to others, or requiring the sense that we are part of something bigger, be it a political ideology, a religious view, social order, or a specific interest. Feeling misunderstood or completely isolated from others in our beliefs can bring on even deeper sentiments of loneliness and abandonment. Many people don't have the courage to keep up a life of feeling like this, and they will eventually bend, break, or change their beliefs in order to become part of a system again.

History is replete with examples that make you wonder how people could ever have acted in the ways they did, sometimes adhering to harmful political or religious ideologies at the expense of their own personal moral or ethical values. But group pressure and group dynamics are extremely powerful tools that hold the ability to consciously or unconsciously distort every-

thing we once thought we knew about ourselves. I do believe that isolation in a wilderness setting for a long period of time will reduce the risk of losing yourself to group pressure, as your heightened self-awareness will make you more sure of yourself and therefore less susceptible to propaganda and persuasion. The most common culprit of feeling alone is actually fear-related—the fear of being excluded. In order to accept your survivalist lifestyle, you will have to learn to be alone and self-sufficient.

We often tend to suppress a lot of our personal qualities, as we are taught to focus only on the few things we know for certain we excel in. During bouts of loneliness or boredom, your imagination should step in and allow you to start exploring other areas of your abilities. You might say that you are not a creative person, but being bored enough will surprise you—you may discover just how many ideas you have, how many unexplored talents you are hiding. You will likely discover immense joy from stepping into these yet undiscovered areas and reinvent-

ing your best qualities.

Boredom is not necessarily a bad situation. As a child, whenever I complained to my mother that I was bored, she would always reply: "Smart kids don't get bored." This always seemed to work because I didn't want to be a dumb kid, and I understood that what she really meant was that if I was smart enough, I would be able to come up with something to do. Survival demands that you always maintain your wits and think on your feet. Even though a life in the wilderness requires you to carry out many tasks, there will nonetheless be moments where you find yourself bored. Maybe it is evening and there is not enough light to keep working, maybe you are waiting for certain materials to become available, or maybe the weather prevents you from working on certain projects. Embrace your boredom in times like this. Appreciate the quiet time, because there will be other times when you will be so busy that you will look back at that moment of boredom with envy and regret because you didn't take more pleasure in this small break, using it as an opportunity to relax and regain your strength.

When boredom becomes overwhelming, we sometimes tend to do stupid things. Everyone needs an adrenaline kick every now and then. Studies have shown that countries in which people feel most comfortable and secure are also the countries that hold the greatest percentage of residents who are into extreme sports. Most of us have tried extreme sports at least once as children or teenagers—we become bored and we challenge each other to become daredevils in order to bring some excitement into our otherwise dull lives. When you feel bored and become restless, you really must consider your actions wisely. Use your energy carefully; exercise is always a good way of both using and gaining energy, as you'll experience a clear head from the workout. It is often the case that one gains energy from expending energy. A nice long run will probably wear away some of the energy restlessly stocked up in your body, but it also offers you a surplus of energy, enabling you to redirect your focus back onto your projects. If you are not physically charged for exercise but still feel restless, meditation can also be a useful method of channeling your energy back to-

wards a focal point. Sometimes our thoughts and worries pile up so high in our heads that they can be draining. Meditation can train you to ignore certain negative thoughts and calmly attend to one thing at a time. A nice long walk or expedition to an unfamiliar place is a great solution for boredom, as are fresh air and the natural curiosity of examining unknown spots. Such activities will stimulate your mind and revitalize your perspective, even leading you to new ideas, projects, or solutions for old problems. Additionally, you must develop a degree of self-sufficiency. You must have faith in your capability to “do it alone.”

Going bush-wacky
It would be unusual if your solitary wilderness life didn't leave you sad and lonely, at least momentarily. But if this bleakness grows, it can turn into depression. Depression is closely related to frustration and can cause the same irrational reactions. Feeling that your goals are unreachable or your situation is unmanageable will make you angry and resentful, and in the long run the frustra-

tion will turn into a destructive cycle, wearing you down emotionally, mentally, and physically. Everything resembles an immense struggle when you are in a depressive state, a hopeless situation with no purpose or positive outcome. It is important to learn how to control these emotions by catching them early on, not letting them sink in or affect you in a way that ultimately puts your survival at risk. It is natural to be sad sometimes and temporarily think back to your old lifestyle with loved ones in a more careless society, but also try to maintain focus on the positive aspects of your new lifestyle and the reasons for why you chose to become a survivalist. Channel that energy into your work and just take it one day at a time. There will be good days and there will be bad days, but if you imagine the future on bad days, it will all seem amiss.

There have been several reported cases of people who have become so mentally affected by their isolation in the wilderness that there is a specific phrase for it: “going bush-wacky.” There are different ways of go-

ing bush-wacky, but some of the signs include: talking to yourself, skepticism towards other people and the modern world, believing conspiracies about society and its political structures, signs of paranoia and bipolar behavior, and a distorted picture of reality. Unfortunately, complete isolation can have negative side effects. If you are not paying close attention to your mental well-being and any changes in your state of mind during your time in the wilderness, you could slowly turn bush-wacky over time without even noticing it. Some people assume this to be the common condition of hermits living in the wilderness, sometimes even going so far as to insinuate that people who choose this kind of lifestyle probably were not sane to begin with. I do not believe this is true. We see plenty of mentally disturbed people in densely populated urban areas as well, so to equate isolation with illness is a gross misgeneralization. While it is true that isolation has been used as a torture tactic in prisons and has hence caused people to suffer, it is important to remember that these were cases of forced isolation. Embarking on a life in the wilderness, on the other

hand, is one's own choice, and it always allows for the freedom to go back to society again and seek social connections if necessary. Isolation is not the main purpose or most integral aspect of the survivalist lifestyle; isolation is only a tool that enables you to better connect with yourself and become more self-aware. If at any point you sense a danger of losing your sanity due to isolation, immediately seek the company of reliable people. Communication with people who you trust understand your motivations for pursuing the survivalist lifestyle can help you to determine if you are exhibiting any behavioral changes that necessitate caution.

Life in the wilderness can alter your mind and disturb your rational thinking, so other people's observations and opinions can sometimes be crucial for your own well-being. Just don't rely on their words exclusively: use your own senses as well. One of the core tenets of the survivalist lifestyle is to become better at understanding your own actions: learning to rely on yourself, improving your confidence, and becoming independent, as long as this independence doesn't

bring you any harm.

There are advantages to facing adversity together with others. As humans we learn individual skills, but we train to function as part of a team. I believe it is healthy to have your own opinions and to question conventions. Innovative ideas and original concepts sprout from thinking outside the box, after all, so a fair amount of skepticism is valuable. You can explore your own creativity by exercising radical ideas. But there is always a fine line between being a genius and being insane, so you must learn how to channel and use your creativity self-consciously, explore your mind without losing it.

Humans have an extraordinary ability to shift environments and easily adapt to new situations. For centuries, human migration has shown how a combination of the desire to explore and the need to move for resources have made us capable of quickly adapting to new habitats, physically and mentally shifting from one place to another. Being able to adapt to sudden changes has

kept us alive and curious about the world. But it is important to understand your own desire to move: is it a necessary relocation for resources, an escape from dangers, or an impulsive reaction to feeling too fixed and comfortable?

Future

I often find myself worrying about the future. I am mostly concerned about money and my well-being. I don't need a lot, I'm happy here in the wilderness. It is a simple life in some ways yet so complex in others. But I am worried about my survival, about whether this lifestyle can keep me going. It is partly the fault of my upbringing; my parents taught me to never spend what you don't have. They taught me to always bear in mind unexpected situations and be careful with investments, always have a safety



Virginia City, Montana, USA, 2011

deposit, and not give into the temptation to buy unnecessary luxury goods. They also taught me to be self-reliant and never expect too much from others. This gave me a reason to pursue a survivalist lifestyle, but it also left me with the insecurities that accompany such a life. I assume that they had different thoughts about what I should have spent my life doing, what they thought I could achieve thanks to their good parenting, but nevertheless, this is what I ended up being.

I still feel that they have difficulty understanding my choices and this worries me. In such moments, I try to remember that times have changed, how life is so different now than it was when my parents were my age, and that they are probably only offering advice onto the next generation with the sincere hope that it will benefit them. If I ever have any children of my own, I will surely pass on to them some of the values that have helped me to navigate my own life. At the very least, I would try to teach a few important lessons to my children. But they should also be allowed the space to make their own judgments about surviving their own lifetime. Circumstances might have changed so much by

then that my guidelines will be worthless, and if that happens, I can only wish that they will have the insight, the self-awareness, and the confidence to build their own foundation and adapt to their situation in a way that brings their life most substance.

I think some apprehension regarding the future is healthy, but I hope that it will occupy less space in my mind. I don't know what use these worries are to me. Unless I can harness them in some way to make better decisions that ultimately build confidence, these worries are really just an unpleasant waste of energy. The best lesson I have learned so far is to avoid thinking too far ahead. It is good to have goals and be prepared for disappointment, but obsessing over every detail and trying to picture every outcome of my actions doesn't actually render me capable of predicting anything. What happens happens, so one might as well just wait and see. No matter how much I would like to believe in a force like karma, or stumble upon a fortune around the corner after things have gone badly, this rarely happens. If such a force seems to exist, we only believe so because we attempt to make sense of all of the random

good and the bad that comes flying at us. We like to systematize our world, because the worst scenario we can imagine is not having any power at all, that nothing in this life is certain or predictable.

Hope

I do still have hope for the future; one has to hold out hope or there would be no point to surviving at all. And I still believe that in adopting a wilderness lifestyle, you will in the end be able to look back on a life that was fully lived. You can be sure that you were always awake, grasping every second because you chose to, and because you decided that it matters to survive, that everything around you was important enough to pay attention to and analyze. In the moment, it might seem like the wilderness hangs over you like an uneasy and unpredictable cloud. But I don't believe that anybody who has lived a relatively easy, effortless, and painless life will look back on it during their last days and think: "I truly experienced life and understand what existence is all about. I comprehend every emotion and feeling

now." When you take away social rules, community structures, culture, political beliefs, and social pressures, what is life really about? When do you feel most alive? What is your reason to survive? What do you want to achieve and look back at with confidence and pride?

Hope is about a wish for something better, a change. If you're like me and feel that things could be different, that things are not working out for you in their current state, rooted in what social structures dictate, then I believe you will find pleasure in wilderness survival. If you are hopeful, you shouldn't just sit back and wait for the changes to come—take action into your own hands and start making changes for yourself. There is not simply one way of living, and life should not be something that merely passes you by. It requires constant involvement and decisive actions. The essential goal of the wilderness survival life is to become aware and reflective, so that you can renew your perspective and hopefully become a more content person.

All of us were born kicking and fighting to live, but we have become used to the soft life. We have become creatures of comfort. We dislike inconveniences and discomfort. What happens when we are faced with a survival situation, with its stresses, inconveniences, and discomforts? This is when the will to live—placing a high value on life—becomes vital. The experience and knowledge you have gained through life and your survival training will have a bearing on your will to live. Stubbornness, a refusal to give in to problems and obstacles that taunt you, will give you the mental and physical strength to endure life in all its complexities.

A key ingredient to any survival situation is the mental attitude of the individual involved. Having survival skills is important, but having the will to survive is essential. Without a desire to survive, acquired skills serve little purpose and invaluable knowledge goes to waste.

Learn to see the potential good in everything. Looking for the good not only boosts morale, but is also excellent for exercising your imagination and creativity.

If by now you are still searching for reasons to embark on a survivalist lifestyle, then you are probably not made of the right stuff to do it. If, on the other hand, you are still reading this book, you might already be a survivor and prepared for the wilderness that lies ahead!

Preparation: the bug-out bag
One of the simplest but most important steps in wilderness survival preparation is to have a well-thought-out and organized bug-out bag. The primary purpose of a bug-out bag is to allow one to evacuate quickly. In case you don't already have your survival shelter set up and functioning, this bag gives you a good start. Even if you are already settled in your wilderness location, it is still a good safety measure to have a bug-out bag ready in the event that you'll have to make a quick escape. This is all the more reason to gather your complete supplies into a concentrated place, such as a single bag or a few storage containers.

If you've already been practicing preparedness for years, chances are that you already know most of this stuff and have your own bug-out bag list. But even as a

survival enthusiast, it is always good to revisit your bug-out bag every now and then, making sure it is still up-to-date. Your situation might have changed or there might be new materials you should consider adding to your bag, or maybe you want to take some things out. Essentially, this bag should save you from a SHTF scenario.

S—Shit
H—Hits
T—The
F—Fan

Those who prepare today will survive tomorrow!

What should be in your bug-out bag? Well, that depends on you personally. You'll have to consider things like your location and where you're going, your health and skills, and the time of the year. That's why there's no one bug-out bag list that fits everyone's needs. By looking at lists already compiled by others, however, we can get ideas and tailor our bug-out bags to our individual locations and needs.

The first things you should consider putting in your bag

are those that are most crucial and will cover your basic needs in the wilderness. That means you'll need: enough food and water to last you for 72 hours, a first-aid kit, fire starting tools, professional emergency literature explaining what to do in various types of disaster, a disaster plan, a plan B, maps, a knife, duct tape, felt, grease and honey, a mirror, a compass, your talisman, a piece of flint, a leaf from the red plant, rope, lighting (battery or crank operated flashlight), weather appropriate clothing, a hare's foot, appropriate footwear, a tinfoil hat, a notebook, and a statement.

Never look back
The time came for me to take a serious inventory of my preparedness. I wanted to be ready for any scenario my mind could conceive and any circumstance that I hadn't yet thought about. After considering myself a frugal person for most of my life, and then realizing that I had in fact been a survivalist for most of that life, I took it upon myself to really become involved in my survival. After all, living and functioning day-to-day in today's world can certainly be considered a measure of survival.

Society has always prescribed the way people should act in civilization. But these rules go out the door when your life or well-being are at stake. I have learned that we are not responsible for another person's happiness, and that no one is responsible for ours. With that in mind, if someone asks for something you are unwilling to do, then don't do it. If it is not working for you, leave.

My personal attempt to adapt to the wilderness and become a survivalist addresses an issue that haunts postmodern culture in general: the viability and meaningfulness of the ideal of authenticity. In becoming a survivalist, I strive for this understanding of artistic authenticity and its intrinsic relationship to the ideal of critical dissent and opposition.

You may say that this is an ideological and mythological approach to life, but personal mythology is a way of dealing with trauma, and as such, it is necessary for psychological survival. That is why I have put the pathology of my trauma to creative use by transforming myself into the survivalist.

My personal mythology may look deceptive and crazy, but it shows my will to survive. It shows the cunning the psyche can muster to survive.







Deep loneliness is sublime, but in a way
that stirs terror.

Hence great far-reaching solitudes, like
the colossal Komul Dessot in Tartary,
have always given us occasion for
peopling them with fearsome spirits
goblins, and ghouls.







Robert's Quarry and the Walnuts Harvest

François Dey

They were heading across the border on their bikes, going up and down the hills of the Maastricht soil. The wind in his hair, François wanted to play the guide on his bike. Looking ahead, he shouted back to the three others while pointing his arm in the direction of what he thought was a highlight of a cultural gap between them.

On their right was the Lotel with its reddish window frames and indoor parking for customers' convenience. Behind the office window stood a flickering neon sign that read: Sauna.

An imposing house and adjoined grand garden stood to their right, with a stone fountain carrying the company's sign in its middle, water flowing diagonally on the brightly lit transparent structure. This beautiful sculpture served as an introduction to the Greek stylized architecture of the house and a garage with classical pillars leveled it up to the status of a temple. These surprises always make your ride a little lighter, especially uphill.

Freewheeling downhill to the bottom of Fort Eben Emael, they were about to park their bikes and continue by foot. Walking gives a distinct pace, a detached viewing experience that follows its own rhythm.

The orchards they sunk their hands into could have contained these walnuts they were looking for, an attraction for food but also a given, reachable goal. Prune trees had already given their fruits, the few of them still rotting up their branches. Apple trees the same and the cherries had been eaten months before. Nothing seemed to be left; only cows populated the surrounding field. They would stop for a little while and give that look oscillating between puzzlement and boredom. They were chewing on their grass.

Their search for food was quickly forgotten after reaching Robert Garcet's mansion. Four gigantic animal figures rose from the top of the corner towers, mythological beasts—half-man, half-animal—ready to take off of the roof, beating their wings frantically. Robert's world does not let one off unaffected. The strangeness of his castle resonates a little further than any attraction park

with monstrous figures. There's a reality to it: though seemingly a fantasy, it actually embodies a lifetime search and dedication to questioning and building a visionary theory from the bottom up, one stone on top of another. It gives you that shiver of otherworldliness, which you take with you at least for a little while.

They could already see the light brown colored walls of the quarry in the faraway horizon—that so-called Maastricht divide marking the end of an era, the mass extinction of certain dinosaurs and other early cretaceous beasts, one of them being the famous Mosasaur, excavated in this area in the eighteenth century. Robert had claimed with photographs the discovery of a jaw belonging to a similar creature. The quest for these lost civilizations gave his quarry a purpose of a different nature than the extraction of resources. For him, knowledge was contained within the rocks themselves: their shapes, their lines drew the legacy of these times.

Slowly turning their eyes away, the group continued on the gravel trail. As soon as they could let go, they let their march steer the boat away.

“Hey! There's a little path!”

They were entering what seemed like a playground for children, tiny hills dispersed around with running tracks drawn on their slopes. It was a whole structure of undefined behaviors: a makeshift fireplace with some old car tires, a little concrete shed—a boy's kingdom or a bum's waste-yard, they couldn't decide. Only afterwards did they realize that it must be Robert Garcet's pit. Flint stones were crumpled in half accumulations, their potato shapes covered with the white dust of lime. They thought that the goal in sight must have been another man's mine. Robert's quarry had just atrophied into a children's playground. They couldn't really decide how to continue about their way. Climb down the sharp flint hills into the bushes, or turn back on their steps and try reaching the road? The group didn't make a move. François looked towards his right and began climbing into

the bush, but the view opened out to a brown field heavily labored with big chunks of earth. The decision was still hanging in the air. After the humming of a few possible directions and disagreements, Nina called for climbing down the rocky hill. They began to crawl on their feet, the clinking of the rocks emitting sharp sounds. Heading towards the front as if he were responsible for creating this situation, François shouted back:

“No problem, I almost see the road! The woods are really deep but we can surely make it.”

The forest was becoming impenetrable. Narrow trees stood intertwined and spiky backwoods infested the area.

“It is really dense, I'm not sure we can make it through. I'll give it a try.”

François placed his jacket on his head and began to force his way into the net of needles. The group was stuck within a 12-meter reach of the road. They were caught in a web of thorny plants and began to feel the first stings of pain. Every movement felt forced, like jaws piercing into different parts of their bodies. For a moment, it felt like Jesus going through a hard time, but for what exactly? Play had escalated into pain. Blaine grew angry and shouted insults at the trees. Toby, only wearing a T-shirt, was just fine and kept the good smile on his face. François had accumulated the will of the band and would not give up. He slowly lifted his head towards the goal, now only four meters away. There, he saw a young man shouting. He was trying to start his motorcycle and couldn't have even possibly imagined four hikers staring at him, projecting unspeakable movements in the bushes that paralleled his anger towards his machine. The group had reached the moment where they could only move about 20 centimeters per minute. The man pushed and pushed his motorcycle; they pulled and ripped through the branches. François thought his jacket would tear into pieces and suddenly, reaching out, he managed to jump out onto the paved road. He clamored in happiness while looking at the man and his motorbike, his face blank in

the deception.

Slowly everyone else came out of the bush. The experience had united them. They were happy to be out of there, excited for the new chapter that lay before them.

They took account of the whole situation: a couple seated on their machines stopped right there in the middle of nowhere in between the gates of the quarry and a fast car lane. Though their trip had maybe come to an end, the strangers' was only beginning.

The group headed towards the main gate, their supposition becoming a reality. The whole quarry was fenced off and, unsurprisingly, closed. François wouldn't give in that easily and tried to impart on everyone the feeling that this was normal, that nothing is ever of simple reach.

"We're just going to follow the fence until this one stops."

Borders are visual tricks.

A field of beetroots stood on their right. They noticed in its middle another plant growing alone. They argued over what it could be. It was of a reddish violet hue with big shapely leaves, a little palm tree in the middle of an ocean. Eventually, they agreed that the plant must be edible. It was their first discovery that they could bring back home and perhaps even cook. François ran through the field, taking big steps as if running the Olympic hurdle, plunging his shoes into the soft soil of the pasturage. With a feeling of stealing in his heart, he ripped a few leaves off of the beautiful plant and held it up to the group, asking if that would be enough.

They continued walking along the fence. The invasive wild flora firmly embraced the enclosure, giving way to the atmosphere of breaking into a private property. More lattice works drew out an empty garden with an industrial block in its center. It looked like a control house of some sort, perhaps an electrical powerhouse or a water pump. There, slightly beyond, was a little path outlined on the grass. After pausing for a second they headed towards it, moving along the backyard of that newly landed prop-

erty. On their right was a high slope, the last obstruction to the stone pit. They joked about the impossibility of walking up there. Toby was thoroughly contemplative about it:

"Sure! We'll just climb it."

He was running up front and wanted to have a piss a little further. A small flow of water split the path. They had already decided to cross the river in search of an entrance that direction. François ran excitedly to the front again and abruptly saw the end of the fence. It was just there, with no end in sight. The vast, expansive distance would already have led others to accept the impossibility of entering. A feeling of relief came over them. Now something real was starting.

Nina walked ahead, ascending the earthy ramp. They had to jump from one branch to another, reaching for handles to pull themselves up. They couldn't even see Nina, who was already moving behind the next pile of soil. Walking and stopping intermittently behind one another, they watched out for flint stones raining on their heads. The earth was thin and wet leaves made the trek slippery. François had almost reached the field and started to look out for Nina, shouting her name. Another little leap of faith and the view began to open onto a flat field resembling wilderness. A trench had been dug out in between these two points—perhaps to stop animals from entering or perhaps to prevent them from getting out. François was enlivened by the obstacle. He took two steps down, making sure his feet were stable, and swiftly jumped across the gap. He landed with both legs, smoothening the shock with his hands on the grass.

On one side of the trench was a cabin for hunters with a poorly-constructed ladder connected to a possible shooting chair. It wasn't really clear if this was meant to be a children's hut or was simply a decaying huntsman cabin. It stood there like a border control, smiling at every possible creature willing and able to get out of the quarry terrain. It didn't make any sense at all.

The landscape of this hole in the ground was opening up around them. They looked around, surveying the area. Toby

thought it would be a good moment to stop and take a breath, to enjoy this apocalyptic sightseeing. Nina had some water and she offered it around to the others.

They had reached their mission.

Walking slowly with a smile curling up in the corner of their mouths, they could now savor every detail of what lay before them. François had taken from Blaine the bike bag carrying the strange red plant. A huge metallic pillar of about 25 meters monitored the inner field of the quarry with its powerful lights. Could they work at night? Were there any cameras on the top of that observatory tower? They started walking down the dusty path shared by trucks that would drive into the excavation area. What was this cornfield doing here in the middle? Perhaps the terrain had to be slowly replenished once the minerals were extracted from it?

Naturally, they made their way into the direction of the walls that would end this walk. The horizon was getting smaller and smaller and its colors faded into a palette of browns. The sun was slowly coming down. A few walnut shells were scattered around on the dirt and stories were invoked to understand what they were doing there. It was as if the two stories had become one: looking for walnuts in the quarry. Did the truck drivers actually eat walnuts here? Something didn't make sense and they kept finding them along the path. The earth was thin and its color was a dense, singular shade of light brown. At some point they encountered a muddy puddle of water about 5 millimeters high. They plunged their feet into it, the dirt coating their footwear like acrylic paint. The road was slowly winding down and its sides were encumbered by masses of flint stones.

There's no use to flint, it's just too hard to process. It is said to be the second hardest mineral right after diamond. A higher, similar heap of earth could be seen from afar. It was as if a road had been carved out for the heavy trucks not to drive too close to the edge. It was like a heap of language, purposively aligned at some

distance, telling the workers about some limits of what to dig or where to drive.

They had reached the facade of the stone mass. The lower wall appeared to be whiter than the upper level. Chalk stone maybe. Standing there, facing the layers of time, it felt like this was the end. The mass didn't really give off the appearance of rock. This was a sand compacted through time. Lines of flint stones were sandwiched in between at different heights. At this point, Blaine came around with one stone in his hand. It looked like a leg. The thought arose as to whether they should leave behind traces for the employees, a message notifying them of their passage. Toby was trying to build a totem with the leg, now hitting one of the sand stones with it. To their surprise, a single tone resonated from the limestone. It was an odd, empty note. Several other layers seemed to open up and Blaine began to refer to Garcet's theories. The rock must have been hollow or contained air to echo such a sound. They tried hitting the other ones with the leg of stone and the same empty tone rang out of each of them. It was true—every shape could recall something more than just a rock. That one leg was already part of a cow, a little cow.

A feeling of emptiness overcame them. Their target had been scored or perhaps they could feel the weight of standing within a hole facing a wall. On their way down they discussed a possible way out. Scouting the end of the horizon, they could only see what they had earlier named the worker's cafeteria. A few metal containers were clumped together on the top of a bare metallic structure fixed into the earth, a slightly brownish level of minerals towering above the 5-or 6-millimeter-tall grass. François kept thinking about it on the way down, wondering if someone was in there, looking. They were discussing a possible way out and thought about the idea of not retracing their steps. The picture of walking in a circle always seems much more attractive. It keeps the adventure going, as if nothing has been reached, no fixed points defined.

Moving their way up out of the chalk level, the soles of their

shoes turned back into the dull light brown color of the central mineral layers. Blaine kept looking at what he referred to as his “African landscape.” This was the big frontage of earth falling from the higher level of the fields. The earth had been piled up and trucked down from the top. It must have rained a lot, because the surface of the hill looked as if it had been sculpted. They could imagine the bodies rolling down the hill, relishing in the earth like in *Zabriskie Point*.

Nina ran toward the clique and volunteered to check if this path was maneuverable. She jumped out onto it, digging her shoes into the earth as if it were fresh snow. The surface level held a little crust while the texture below was quite smooth. Everyone followed and made their way towards the road facing the forest. There were fresh traces of boots in the mud, evidence of others who must have also snuck in this way.

Once again they encountered halves of walnuts on the ground. This couldn’t be true. The local birds must have dropped them there over time, they thought, gathering the walnuts until they could eat them. And suddenly, there it was. A big, wild tree. François began running toward it. He wanted it to be that walnut tree—it had to somehow make sense. Toby and Nina sat waiting, their eyes transfixed on the sunset.

The tree floor was full of these precious nuts that had to be collected before they’d rot. They began filling up Blaine’s bag, trying to grab as much as they could. The grass was completely covered with leaves, making it harder to see anything whatsoever. The image of a squirrel harvesting his winter resources echoed in their heads. Nina and Toby were calling them back when all of a sudden something caught their attention out there in the front. It was a scrunching sound. Blaine had already stopped and was trying to localize the source. François had also noticed the crackle. It was right there, one or two meters away. Blaine tried to throw some branches towards it, but they kept firing back. Was it a squirrel? Someone was not happy having them on the property and whoever it was made it clear to the group that they had to

leave. They rushed the last shells into their bag and began hopping through the bushes, their ankles stinging on the nettles.

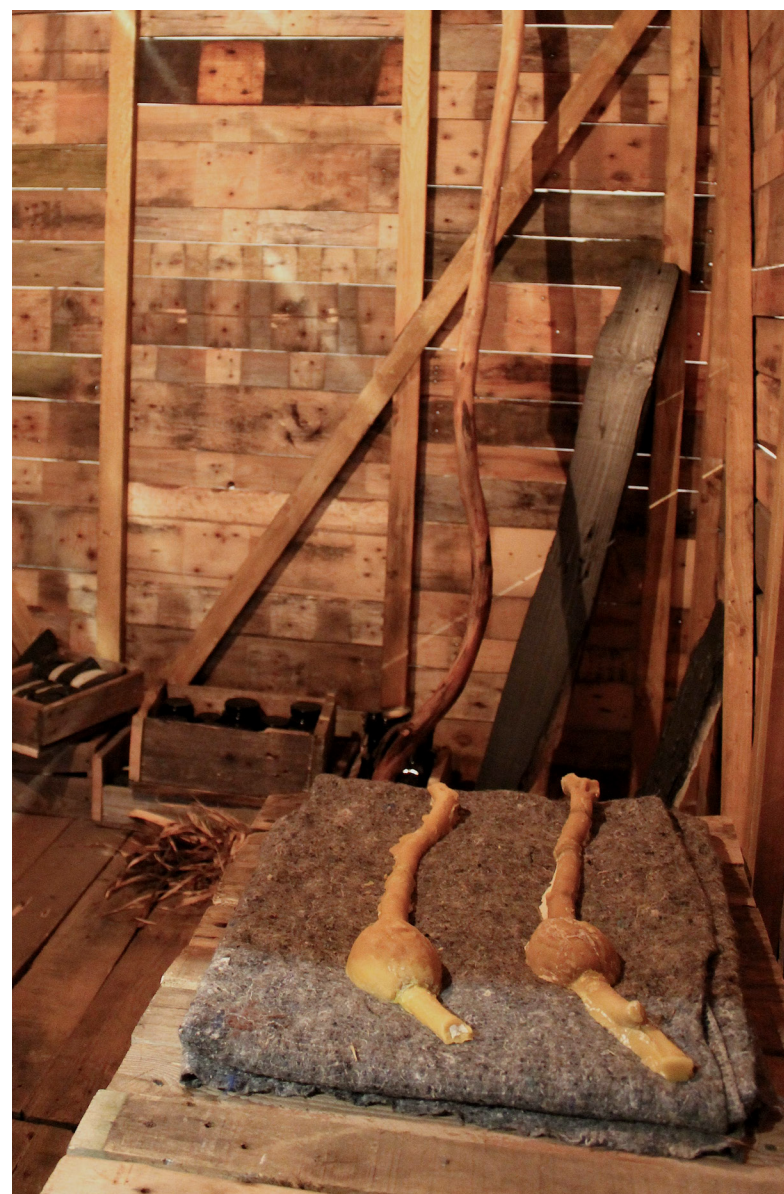
Now it was really time to find a way out, as soon as possible, before they’d become stuck or run into some barbed wire in the dark. They heard a dog barking a little further away and pictured houses nearby. Passing a little piece of forest and easily holding up the metal wire between their hands and feet, they ended up in an open terrain with some cows, who appeared undisturbed by the new faces walking on their land. It was as if they had arrived in the backyard of some home. They saw wooden enclosures ahead as well as a wonderful dark sunset and two cows. This was the perfect Pink Floyd LP cover.















Joris Lindhout

It must have been the premiere of Job Koelewijn's *Real Fiction Cinema* that inspired the topic of our conversation during that evening in Zürich's Kronenhalle bar. In his cinema, Koelewijn had replaced the screen with a similar sized hole in the wall, and we had just spent about ninety minutes in the cinema seats, watching boats of all different sizes calmly float by on the Zürichsee. I found it to be a calming yet worrisome experience. On the one hand, there was the trance-inducing effect of looking at a moving image in which very little actually happens. On the other hand was the unnerving idea that we needed the physical and psychological context of the entertainment industry to be able to enjoy the beauty of the everyday.

Jan was the first one to speak upon leaving the cinema: "That was nice. You should make sure Koelewijn installs one of these in The Netherlands, Rudi. Preferably next to the intersection of two canals. All that horizontal and vertical movement would produce a Mondriaan-like painting that actually moves."

Karel was a bit less enthusiastic: "They used to do this on TV as well, on Sundays. They would just put a camera in a busy street and film that for the entire day. It was a great pastime and far more democratic than this highly aestheticized, testosterone-fueled art."

I actually thought it was a great work of art, but for quite personal reasons. It reminded me of my encounter with Ms. Kurtz a few decades ago. You might still remember her as the infamous Loverval Hermit. Jan Hoet and I had this idea for an exhibition which would explore the function of high modern art in the lives of people who had deliberately chosen a very austere way of life. We were looking for a functional relationship between abstraction and lifestyle in a similar vein to Jan's explorations into exhibiting art outside of the white cube from previous years. Ms. Kurtz had become the key to this exhibition: the artist whose work had the ability to unlock the exhibition concept. But meeting her had become a far more influential experience in both my and Jan's lives. It had been a formidably sublime experience.

So there we were, sitting around a table in the Kronenhal-

le: Karel Appel, Jan Dibbets, and I together with a bottle of Müller-Thurgau. Jan, probably seeing me deeply embedded in my thoughts, inquired:

“Rudi, what’s on your mind?”

“Job’s work reminded me strongly of *Solemnly Sublime*, that exhibition I did with Jan Hoet around ‘86 in Ghent. Did I ever tell any of you Ms. Kurtz’ full story?”

I began spinning my yarn while cutting a cigar. Jan and I were in Antwerp for our monthly gallery tour when we saw a remarkable woodcarving in an exhibition at the artist-run initiative Cintrik, or maybe it was Ruimte Morguen... No, it must have been Cintrik. If I remember well, that exhibition was dealing with the aesthetic implications of the death of the author—it was the eighties after all, and everything was dying. The carving was an intricate abstract relief reminiscent of Donald Judd’s most recent works. The work possessed a similar spatial presence and meditative power while obviously being a product of handicraft. Somewhat blown away, we—quite ignorantly—asked the person guarding the exhibition which artist had made that piece. Of course, no one knew; the exhibition consisted of works that had been found on the streets and whose creators were completely unknown. This particular piece had been found in the vicinity of Charleroi, a tenebrous part of Belgium that forms the northern part of the Ardennes mountain range.

While we perplexedly continued to study the Judd-defying object in front of us, the guard continued his explanation:

“There is a hunch where this one came from though...”

We turned our heads and looked at him in anticipation.

“Only it’s somewhat of a myth...”

Disappointedly, I directed my attention back on the object.

“They say that the Loverval Hermit made it. The village of Loverval has a lot of unsolved cases of petty theft: food, candy, water, gas tanks, batteries and books—specifically art books. Although the signature of these thefts has been the same for something like sixteen years, the police have never managed to make any arrest related to them. The townspeople attribute them to this

more or less mythical person who lives in the woods and only steals what he or she needs for nutrition. On top of that, these beautiful objects are sometimes found in the village, right after another round of break-ins has taken place, seemingly as a form of payment for the stolen items. Most of them are woodcarvings but sometimes they are made out of plastic bags or other wrapping materials. The wood is a type of pine that is omnipresent in the southern part of Belgium and the plastics that are used are often identifiable as wrapping material from food that went missing after another round of break-ins.”

After that visit to Antwerp, the Loverval woodcarving slowly became somewhat of a keystone to the exhibition that we had been working on. It was such a sound piece of work, and completely in tune with the epistemological framework we had begun to build. We had already made a scale model of the rooms of the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst (Museum of Contemporary Art) and were entering the final stages of the exhibition design when I read my morning newspaper and my eye caught a headline on the local affairs page: ‘Loverval Hermit Arrested & Accused Of More Than 1,000 Burglaries.’

Now that the supposed creator of our keystone object wasn’t much of a myth anymore, we felt indebted to at least ask for permission to exhibit it. And so, we wrote her a letter:

Dear Ms. Kurtz,

We hope this letter finds you in good health and we want to express our concerns around your current situation.

My name is Rudi Fuchs. I am a curator of contemporary art and, together with my colleague Jan Hoet, I'm working on an exhibition in the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst in Ghent. By coincidence we stumbled upon an intricate wooden object that has become pivotal in our thinking around this exhibition. We have reason to believe that you are the artist behind this object.

I'm writing you to ask for your permission to exhibit it. In an attempt to make it absolutely sure that we are both speaking of the same object, I've included a written description of it below. You should know that with this exhibition we want to explore the function of high modern art in the lives of people who have deliberately chosen an austere lifestyle. I'm sure you understand how we came to value your work in this context.

The object has the shape of a perfect cube, measuring about ninety centimeters in every direction, and is made of spruce. Its surface is flat on five sides and open on the sixth. Inside are three diagonally placed surfaces. Two connecting outside panels are sloped. Everything is carved from a solid piece of wood, but is made to mimic multiple panels of industrial-grade plywood. The carving is so well done that one has to search for traces of handicraft.

Very much looking forward to your answer.

*Best regards,
Rudi Fuchs*

Her reply came as a surprise in many ways. It came swiftly, was very short and well informed:

Mr. Fuchs,

I know who you are. I also know who Mr. Hoet is. I'm mainly writing you back to be able to take my mind off of things. The prison is an awful place. I'm very tired all the time. The object is indeed mine. You can use it for your exhibition. It was kind of you to ask. Please send me some reviews.

C.K.

I myself was content with this answer and was ready to move ahead, but Jan had become increasingly concerned with her situation. He was convinced that the hostile prison environment would harm her talents. They would either put her in a woodworking class led by some creative therapy person who would force her to make nice and friendly figurative reliefs, or they would take the arts out of her life all together, he said. And on top of that, she had only committed relatively small crimes in order to stay alive, right? She had lived on the excess fat of modern society, something that everyone could do without. Her way of living was exactly the kind of austere life we had been after. Jan was determined to get her out of that prison cell.

"A residency!" he clamored when coming into the office one morning. "An artist residency as a means of social service! If we can convince the judge that some form of social service would provide a more solid grounding for her re-entry into society than a prison sentence would, and if we can show them in what way her work is important for contemporary visual art, we might just have a case here."

Jan was very well connected and it didn't take a lot of effort to get some of the leading psychiatrists in the country to take a look at the case. Agreeing with Jan's line of thinking, they helped to have his residency plan approved by a judge. The city had recently purchased a large parcel of land located at the edges of Ghent that they were planning on converting into a natural reserve named after the old land of Bourgoyen-Ossemeersen. On it stood an aged farm, located next to a side stream of the Leie River. As the land around it was flat and this was the only man-made structure for miles, it seemed like an environment in which Ms. Kurtz would feel more at home than somewhere in the city center. One of the conditions the judge had set was the installment of a police post that would watch her every move. She conceded and moved in three weeks later.

Needless to say, these developments influenced the final plans we had made for the exhibition. We would still show the Loverval woodcarving, but now we were also required to exhibit the

results of Ms. Kurtz' social service. This worried me; I was afraid we would gain more attention as a kind of freak show than as a serious contemporary art exhibition. Jan didn't disagree, but he felt that the importance of this exhibition and all that surrounded it would outlive the image of a freak show.

Ms. Kurtz' farmhouse residency was quite hard to reach. The house had been vacant for decades and the original dirt road that connected the house to the city had become completely overgrown with bushes and small poplar trees. To reach it, one had a choice between walking for ninety minutes through rough and overgrown farmland or going by boat, which would take you almost all the way up to the house. Neither of us had ever met Ms. Kurtz in the flesh up until this point. I myself wasn't particularly looking forward to it—something kept me at bay. Perhaps it was Jan's unmitigated conviction that what he was doing was proof of a high moral standard. On top of that, I generally don't like studio visits. They almost always, without exception, take away some of the initial allure of the work. That's why I like Rembrandt so much—I can never be forced into doing a studio visit with him.

Jan had arranged a boat for our first visit to the residency. At some ungodly hour, he picked me up from De Plantaan, the hotel I always stay in when I am in Ghent. Outside it was very foggy, especially on the water. From the boat I could hardly see the quay of the canal, let alone the houses on the street above it. Jan was navigating the boat very slowly in the direction of the Leie. The boat itself was quite unremarkable: it was a small plastic motorboat without a cabin and it bore the name *Redux*. Jan was standing behind the wheel at the rear and I was sitting on the deck at the front. I lit a cigar and quickly put it out after just a few huffs. The fog made everything so humid that the smoke entered my mouth in liquid form. I spat in the water in an attempt to get rid of the burning taste when I heard Jan shouting: "Miljaar!" I looked over my shoulder and saw him trying to protect his head against the shower of little stones that were hitting both him and the boat. I looked up and saw that we were passing under a bridge. In the fog, I could discern the heads of a few kids prying

through the sides of the bridge. They laughed mockingly while throwing another few handfuls of gravel at us. I saw a small stream emerging from a little red dot that had formed on Jan's forehead.

After a while—it must have been more than an hour, as the sun was setting and the fog was slowly dissipating—the police post came in sight. The tall man-built quay that supported the sides of the canal in the village made way for a lower, but heavily overgrown, natural bank. Bushes and dead reeds blocked most of our view over the fields as the river still lay slightly lower than the land. The only reason we could make out the police station was because the two men were smoking outside their little cabin. We noticed the ends of their cigarettes lighting up in a fierce orange and decided to moor and walk up to them for a chat and hopefully a warm cup of coffee as well.

The police officers made their assessment of Ms. Kurtz' situation very clear: "She's crazy, this one."

They told us that Ms. Kurtz was walking the same geometric patterns at fixed times every day, halting only at certain places. At some of these places, she would just stand still. At other ones, it appeared as if she were rearranging things on the ground. Beyond this, the officers never really saw her. They were stationed in between some trees at quite a distance from the house, which made it difficult for them to peek through the dark windows even with their binoculars. After we finished our coffees we went back to our boat and took off for the final stretch.

It was an old, traditional farmhouse with a red tile roof that extended until just below the ceiling of the first floor. It had white brick walls, small windows on the long sides of the house and a few really big ones on the short side. The entrance was located on one of the long sides, so while approaching the house, we couldn't see much of what was going on inside through its small windows. It was very quiet out there. Besides the wind rattling the last dead leaves that managed to hang onto the big linden tree next to the house, the only other thing that was audible was a faint echo of the highway on the other side of the large canal. If I ever find

myself in a position in which I'd need to do civil service, I would surely want to do it there.

Jan became excited. I could tell from his accelerated pace and a slight raise in the pitch of his voice. I became more hesitant and slowed down my pace. My face must have spoken volumes; Jan looked over his shoulder and yelled at me.

"Come on now, you grumpy Dutchman!"

While I was only halfway between the river and the front door, Jan had already knocked. He tried a second time but Ms. Kurtz didn't answer. He began to open the door while shouting a warning.

"It's Rudi and Jan, we're coming in now!"

We entered and found ourselves in the kitchen. There was one of those old AGA ovens, which wasn't actually on judging by the temperature inside. We saw a few buckets full of candy and crisp wrappers standing next to the entrance, but other than that, the place seemed uninhabited. It appeared as if no one had lived there for decades. Yet sounds emanating from behind the door to the left proved otherwise and drew our attention.

The space behind that door was enormous. All structural elements that had once been present were removed: stables, an attic, everything. Even the flooring was gone, with sheer uncovered dirt in its place. Woodcarvings, objects made of different candy, and crisp wrappings were scattered about, some on the floor, others resting on one of the wooden pillars or beams that supported the roof. The dirt floor was covered with a sea of wood chips and discarded wrapping material, intersected by a few paths that formed a geometric pattern. On a point where several of these paths met we found Ms. Kurtz sitting on the floor. Arranged in a circle around her we noticed several switched-on flashlights, providing her with light while she was carving a block of wood. One of the flashlights shone on a big book. I recognized the work of Gordon Matta-Clark in the photographs on the open page.

Ms. Kurtz didn't look at us—at least not at our faces.

"I'm not used to seeing people's faces," she said. "There's too much information there. Aren't you aware of it? Too much, too

fast.” She was carving another relief that looked like a Judd, but this time she cut a series of overlapping circular holes that sliced one another in different angles right through all of the panes.

“We came to see the works that you want to have included in the exhibition, Ms. Kurtz,” Jan tried cautiously.

“No... no... you can’t show these. They’re not good enough. Not yet. Just show the one you already have instead,” she replied. Suddenly she rose up and started walking on one of her paths, trying to maneuver around us while walking in straight lines only. She lifted a bundle of smaller books that had been bound together with a piece of rope and handed them to us. If I remember correctly, the titles were *In Praise Of Shadows* by Tanizaki, *Walden* by Thoreau, and *The Artworld* by Danto.

“Show the work you already have, get me out of here and leave me alone,” she commanded us.

After taking the exact same route back to her working place, she continued slicing away at her beautiful carvings. Ms. Kurtz was intensely ignoring us. She didn’t want us there, I didn’t feel comfortable being there. Jan was holding the small pile of books she gave us and also didn’t know what to say next. I felt hyper-aware of all my gestures, my expressions, my breathing, and I urged Jan to leave.

“That was terrible, Jan. We can’t do this to her or to ourselves. She is unsound. I think we should cancel the exhibition and do a solo with Dibbets instead.”

“Rudi, I know you don’t like studio visits. But think of it: they are usually unusual. You enter the alien world of someone trying to think freely. And I think Ms. Kurtz is one of the very few people who holds a profound understanding of what thinking freely entails as a human being.”

At the opening reception Ms. Kurtz looked very pale and thin. I wondered how anyone eating that much candy and crisps could ever remain so thin. One of the things I most clearly remember her saying was something connected to her reasons for creating art while being all by oneself: *I lost my identity. With no audience, no one to perform for, I was just there. There was no need*

to define myself; I didn’t even have a name. I never felt lonely. To put it romantically: I was completely free. In the end we decided to only show the Loverval woodcarving and the pile of bound-together books she had given us following another, extremely short, letter that she had sent:

I’m irrelevant. Please leave me out of this.

The works Ms. Kurtz had made while in residence became part of the archive of the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst. Jan had to talk the hind legs off a donkey to have this decision approved by the judge, a task that suited him well. He persuaded the judge to approve on the condition that Ms. Kurtz would be there at the opening to publicly apologize for the crimes for which she was held responsible.

As expected, it was extremely busy at the opening. Nobody had ever seen Ms. Kurtz, as the media had not been allowed to publish any pictures of her thus far. To make sure she wouldn't be recognized before her public statement, we let her stay in one of the offices until the moment was there.

"Where did you store all the snacks?" asked a boy who had always worked as a waiter at the openings. Annoyed at his ignorance, I walked with him to the kitchen to show him where we always stored the food and drinks for the openings. I opened the cupboard and was shocked to find that everything was gone, except for the five jars of pickles I had ordered. I ran to the storage room to see if, for some unknown reason, the delivery boy had left it there. Afoot I bumped into a stressed Jan.

"Where is Ms. Kurtz?" he asked me. "We're officially opening in five minutes, we need her downstairs, now!"

She was gone. And most likely, she had taken all the food with her. The police organized a search, but discontinued it after two weeks when not a single lead had been found. The exhibition suffered from this sudden turn of events: people blamed us for the escape of someone people still thought of as a "convict" and the media largely boycotted the show.

Karel poured us the last bit of Müller-Thurgau.

"So why exactly does Koelewijn's work remind you of these events, Rudi?" he inquired.

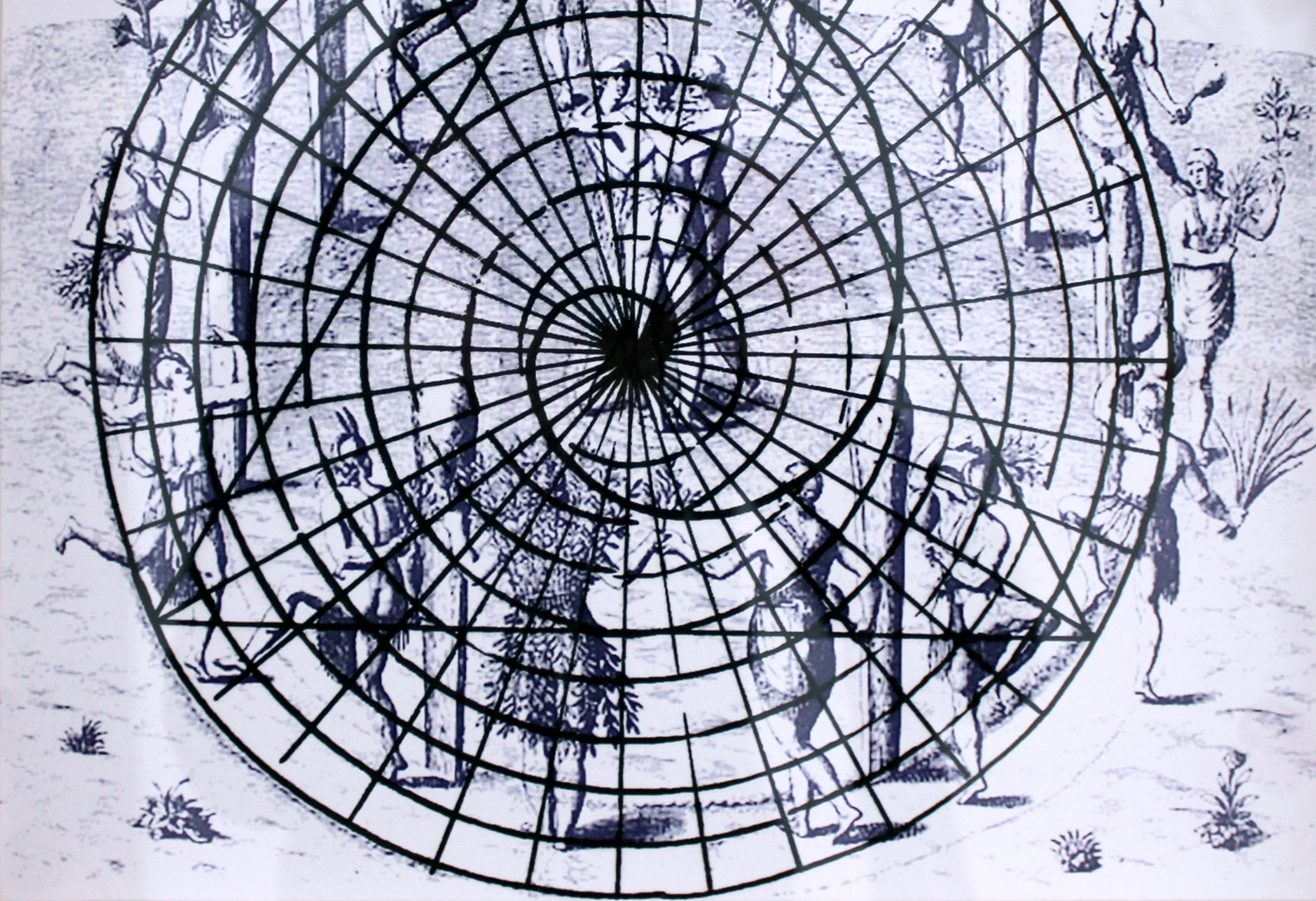
"Well, while I was sitting in my cinema seat, looking at that cropping of the everyday, I was reminded of something Ms. Kurtz had told us regarding how she spent her time. She said she'd watched for years as a shelf mushroom grew on the trunk of a spruce in her camp. I have always found that to be a very powerful

image. The stillness in the image presented today in Koelewijn's work and the relative solitude offered by a black box made for an experience that vividly reminded me of that remark of hers. I think this is the closest I ever came to understanding anything of who Ms. Kurtz actually is and what she represents to me.

I sipped my last bit of wine, stood up, and walked towards the exit of the bar. My next exhibition would revolve around John Cage.











GO
BACK

GONE

ALL
HOPE





Pádraic E. Moore

Dearest P.,

Thank you for your letter which evidently I have received, despite your misgivings that it may not reach me. I'm still building my little house deep in the wilderness and although there is still much to be done, progress has ceased for winter. Fortunately, construction of the shelter was completed before conditions really deteriorated, so I'm insulated from the increasingly inclement weather. Although I still believe that living off of the electricity grid has been a wise decision, recent months have been extremely challenging, not least because I still haven't succeeded in setting up the PV system and am therefore without power. I'm currently cooking on a camp stove and using propane lamps and heaters for light and warmth. It's going to take a long time before I achieve something even approaching comfort but I've no regrets about renouncing my previous life. The decision to eschew the shallow, superficial existence I was leading was entirely necessary. Had I continued on the path I was on, I'd inevitably have found myself complying with middle-class notions of respectability and conforming to countless conventions I've spent my life fighting against.

I read *Walden* several years ago. It's a rambling book and I don't recall it in detail but I do remember appreciating how solitude and self-sufficiency are advocated throughout as a means of achieving psychological clarity and spiritual fulfillment. Although Thoreau only dropped out of society for a couple of years, he certainly seemed to have found transcendence in that period, and the book that emerged from his time spent living as a hermit has undoubtedly inspired many others to follow a similar course. I suppose *Walden* could be considered one of the first books to popularize the archetype—embraced by so many in the 1960s—of the individual who abandons urban domesticity in pursuit of an independent, sustainable, and self-sufficient lifestyle. Another important aspect of Thoreau's book is its promotion of civil disobedience—not only as a human right, but as an obligation. Nevertheless, despite its many merits, *Walden* will forever be inextricably linked in my mind with Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber. There are, after all, so many parallels between the secluded existence led by Kaczynski and the way of life of which Thoreau writes about in *Walden*. One sometimes wonders if Kaczynski was perhaps self-consciously emulating his literary predecessor in some way. Either way, it is possible to see Kaczynski's pursuit of total self-sufficiency as either a twisted distortion of Thoreau's idyll or else the ideal promoted in *Walden* brought to its logical conclusion.

Kaczynski began his career in 1967 as a prodigious mathematician, lecturing at Berkeley when he was still in his mid-twenties. After two years of teaching, Kaczynski underwent what was either an epiphany or descent into madness. He assumed a radical position regarding the direction he believed society was headed. In particular, Kaczynski was concerned with how technology was blindly embraced in the Western world, with little consideration given to its potential consequences. Kaczynski renounced his previous life as a mathematician and relocated to one of the most desolate areas of Montana. There, he built a small cabin and lived in almost total isolation, hunting animals, growing vegetables, reading, and exploring the surrounding countryside. In writings

and interviews Kaczynski reflects fondly upon this time, though his writing does reflect some sense of the misanthropy that would become a major motivating factor in his later actions. Kaczynski's philosophy (which has been the focus of much analysis by psychologists) was not so much anti-government as it was anti-technology. In 1978 Kaczynski began a sporadic seventeen-year-long attack on the individuals and organizations he saw as representative of the technocratic status quo. From his isolated cabin in the woods, Kaczynski became the archetypal anarcho-primitivist, producing handmade bombs that were often inserted into rustic wooden boxes alongside shards of sharpened wood that would function as shrapnel. It's these details that make his obsessive mission so intriguing.

Most of these bombs were disseminated via the postal system to universities (including one he had previously worked at) and airlines, targeted because they promulgated the technological systems Kaczynski believed were insidiously dominating and despoiling the earth. In addition to letters written anonymously by Kaczynski, his motives and objectives were outlined in his extensive manifesto published in 1995 in *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times*. The manifesto provides a thorough explication of how the Industrial Revolution and the dependence upon technology which followed it have had disastrous consequences for the human species and the ecosystem of planet Earth. It's an undeniably compelling—although rather paranoid—argument which proposes that the realms of science, government, and education have utilized forms of technology that subjugate and control the masses in subliminal and irreversible ways. From today's perspective, much of Kaczynski's writings seem prophetic. In them, he describes the technological webs upon which we are so reliant as comprising a hostile system in which all parts are dependent on one another; a system guided not by ideology, but by technical necessity. While the violent acts perpetrated by Kaczynski were of course abhorrent, they were carried out earnestly, in a sincere effort to bring down the system that has materialized in the pe-

riod of time since he was jailed in 1996. From the perspective of the present day, one cannot simply dismiss his words as the misanthropic ramblings of a psychopath. I must admit that many of his opinions resonate with my own. It would seem Kaczynski was on a one-man mission to slow the inevitable progress of “technological slavery,” and though he didn’t succeed in bringing about a collapse of the system he so despised (it would never have been possible), he did evade arrest for seventeen years. Revisiting the case in 2014, one can’t help but imagine how it could never have occurred. Today, the level of surveillance is too great and the grid of communications too efficient to permit an individual to wield such a sustained attack on the world.

The interviews conducted with Kaczynski after his arrest often express outrage at the way in which his environment was being steadily devastated. In his view, this destruction of nature was ultimately tantamount to the destruction of liberty. For Kaczynski, technological progress was inextricably connected with the annihilation of the environment in which he had found happiness. In his writings, he even mentions the desire to exact revenge upon the society that is unwaveringly destroying and despoiling the earth. It would seem that living in complete isolation in the depths of that dense forest provided Kaczynski with what Thoreau called “the tonic of wilderness.” The notion that one can find peace of mind via submergence in the natural world is something that interests me deeply. About a decade ago, when I was walking in some hinterland, I realized for the first time that the only place I had ever felt something truly vital was when I was surrounded by the profusion of unbridled wilderness. It was around then that I—someone who had always identified as agnostic—began to view nature from a pantheistic perspective. What I mean is that being here in the wilderness instills within me a sense that there is a life force, something almost divine, tangible in the natural world. Since relocating here, the translated writings of Hildegard von Bingen have become an important touchstone for me, assisting me in my efforts to view the world through a new

lens. These writings are dense and often cryptic but I am in awe of her mind, which was undoubtedly that of a radical. Although she was obviously devoted to the Christian cause, her approach was singular and it was ultimately the life force visible to her in the natural world that she worshipped. In *O Viridissima Virga* Hildegard writes of “the greenest branch” as not only beautiful, but sacred—and worthy of worship—because it is a manifestation of the subtle energies that unify and animate all living things. Some might view Hildegard as a kind of proto-ecofeminist in the way that she focuses explicitly upon the destruction of the natural world in several of her writings and repeatedly emphasizes the notion that Earth is a “mother.” She writes: “the elements are complaining with strident voices to their creator. Confused through the misdeeds of humans, they are exceeding their normal channels, set for them by their creator through strange and unnatural movements and energy currents.” Inherent in this passage is the notion that some sort of divine justice will be meted out to the inhabitants of Earth who have failed to act as custodians to Mother Earth. Hildegard prophesizes in the same vein as Kaczynski and her vision is apocalyptic. She, too, foresees turbulence, upheaval, and chaos: degeneration and collapse will occur as a result of the unrelenting destructive forces of humankind.

During the period of her life when she was living in silence and solitude, Hildegard formulated a cohesive view of the world and, it could be said, achieved the meditative state that allowed her to “find God.” While it may be possible to achieve some sort of transcendence via solitude, it is my belief that it is also required for the most basic aspects of human functioning. Solitude is a vital component of mental functioning that makes it possible to process the sensory bombardment one encounters on a daily basis. Yet paradoxically, it would seem that solitude and silence have never been harder to find or less appreciated as crucial, despite the fact that we may need them more than ever in this accelerated age. For it seems to me that some of the most profound human experiences and thought processes occur when we are

alone and have nothing to do with interpersonal encounters. For me the decision to move out here was less important than the decision to disconnect from the communication networks that have become such an integral aspect of contemporary life. In order for me to truly achieve the seclusion and the silence that I require, it was necessary for me to sever all ties with these networks. The telecommunications that have become compulsory components of everyday life have dissolved the isolation that physical distance could give. I was preoccupied by these thoughts in the months before I moved here. I became acutely aware that in this technophilic age of ours, seeking solitude is looked upon with suspicion as though it were some kind of aberration, as if being alone is often confused today with loneliness.

I thank you for writing to me out here. I am grateful and willing to communicate with you if it makes you feel better about my being here. However, I'd rather not think or talk about the person that I used to be. I'll admit: there were some truly special times in the past and I do occasionally reflect upon them with a certain fondness. However, even though I enjoyed the frisson and the frivolity of that phase of my life, everything and everybody (including myself) began to seem so horribly hollow. Out here I feel awake again; silence and solitude have rejuvenated my perspective and just being alive is enough. As I told you before, I know what I do not want to become and I have moved away from it. Out here in the woods, I will attain clarity and make myself open, so that I can finally become a vessel for cosmic information.

Love,

C.

In the summer of 2014, just as I had started my residency at the Jan van Eyck Akademie in Maastricht, The Netherlands, I came across the story of the North Pond Hermit. This man had been living in the woods for nearly thirty years before his arrest for breaking into people's homes to steal food and other items necessary for his wilderness survival. Christopher Thomas Knight, the Hermit, wrote of his life in solitude:

"I did examine myself. Solitude did increase my perception. But here's the tricky thing—when I applied my increased perception to myself, I lost my identity. With no audience, no one to perform for, I was just there. There was no need to define myself; I became irrelevant. The moon was the minute hand, the seasons the hour hand. I didn't even have a name. I never felt lonely. To put it romantically: I was completely free."

For some years now, I have held a fascination with survivalism as a phenomenon, as has been evident in my work. It is an alluring idea indeed, to choose a completely solitary life in the wilderness—not like Henry David Thoreau's dilettante attempt with his two-year social experiment at Walden Pond, carried out in close (safe) proximity to society, but the genuine and complete withdrawal from the world as we know it. Seeing as to the fact that I would probably never realize such a dramatic lifestyle change, however, I began to imagine the notion of survival in relation to my own artistic practice within my newfound situation: the solitary, self-reliant yet encouraging and collaborative atmosphere of the artist residency.

Together with several fellow Van Eyck participants who I found shared my interests, we began to discuss these ideas and terms. I invited them to contribute their own perspectives for what I imag-

ined would be pieced together into a basic survival guide.

I owe my deepest gratitude to everyone whose words, thoughts, comments, and criticisms contributed to making this project come alive. I am particularly indebted to Niels Henriksen, Joris Lindhout, François Dey, and Pádraic E. Moore for their inspiring conversations and immense dedication to the spirit of collaboration. Marie Grønkær, with her excellent sense of design and acute understanding of my diffuse research and scattered archive of images, translated the book's concept into a stunning visual layout. I am also grateful to Şeyma Bayram for her hard editorial labor and for providing valuable feedback on the texts. Last but not least, I am indebted to Kris Dittel and Freek Lomme of Onomatopée for seeing potential in this project and adding this publication to Onomatopée's exceptional archive.

Page: 65 – 76

Habitat (2015), Jan Van Eyck
Academie, Maastricht Holland.

Page 89 – 91, 96

*The first Thing that dissapeared
was the Bird*, (2014)
Sejrø, Denmark

Page 92 – 94, 97

Cabin, (2012)
Brandts, Odense, Denmark

Page 95

*There is a bit of Magic in Eveyth-
ing, and then some Loss to even
Things out*, (2012)
Gl. Strand gallery,
Copenhagen, Denmark

Page 98 – 100

Ah, Wilderness! (2011)
The Waller Yoblonsky gallery,
Bozeman, Montana, USA

117 – 128

Ghost Dancers (2015)
Ok Corral, Copenhagen,
Denmark

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A Guide to the Aesthetics of
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