



Laurence Aëgerter

Healing Plants for Hurt Landscapes

In her series Healing Plants for Hurt Landscapes, **Laurence Aëgerter** (1972, France) looks to photography as a means of recovery from disaster. Rather than looking head-on at victims or dealing directly with those who have been harmed by tragedies worldwide, Aëgerter makes use of found imagery, plant life and the involvement of a Dutch community to arrive at a symbolic act of healing.

It started with a community art project based on the meticulous recreation of a medicinal garden that was originally located at the Abbey of Saint Gall, a medieval monastery in Switzerland. Constructing the garden on an unused plot of land in Leeuwarden, The Netherlands, Aëgerter desired to create cohesion among residents as they participated, the metaphor of tending to one's garden drawing them into an involved caring.

Aëgerter then selected images of disasters from the internet, representing a diversity of destructive events and geographies, which were then to be 'healed'. Local residents were invited to participate by applying treatments to these landscapes with medicinal plants from the garden, using the appropriate antidote, for example using ginger against pain caused by burns. The completed works are vividly alive landscapes, linking life with photographs of life, and connecting local concern with global experiences. At once performative and restorative, the series is a reminder that the goal of photography need not be limited exclusively to the finished object.

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