

Un mal pour un bien

Angelo Vermeulen, 2006/2007

Documentary, approx. 30 min, color video



Un mal pour un bien is a video project focusing on the aftermath of the avian flu threat in the National Botanical Garden of Belgium during the summer of 2006. Up until then vast geese populations resided in this botanical garden. However, the birds both disrupted the local ecosystem and posed a potential health hazard because of avian flu. Consequently, drastic measures were taken to reduce their numbers. A ban on feeding by visitors was imposed and part of the geese population was – allegedly – gassed and removed from the site.

The film follows a small community of ‘habituees’ who are strongly attached to the animals and are appalled by the events. Throughout the film they extensively debate the relationship between man and nature, intolerance, and aggression. They divulge alternative scenarios to handle the problems and contrive their own ecological analyses.¹

The project was created for the contemporary art exhibition *Bruegel Revisited*² in the National Botanical Garden of Belgium in 2005. New video material was shot and edited on a regular basis during the exhibition itself. As such, the film grew organically and updated versions of the film were sequentially displayed. The last interviews were recorded during the closing days of the exhibition.

¹ Interestingly, this seems to be a widespread global phenomenon. Local pressure groups and action committees recurrently emerge to battle similar events in other countries. The rhetoric is often extremely anthropocentric and characteristically borrows vocabulary from the Holocaust. The following websites offer some good examples:

<http://www.citlink.net/~goldschd/savethegeese/images/scotiageese2006052101.jpg>

<http://www.hallofshame.lovecanadageese.com/olney.html>

² http://www.bruegel06.be/en/ten_revisited.htm