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## **Picturing landscape : contemporary photography, collective visual memory and the making of place in the Netherlands**

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### **Citation**

Heuvel, M. E. N. van den. (2018, September 18). *Picturing landscape : contemporary photography, collective visual memory and the making of place in the Netherlands*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/65568>

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Cover Page



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**Title:** Picturing landscape : contemporary photography, collective visual memory and the making of place in the Netherlands

**Issue Date:** 2018-09-18

## Chapter 4

### APPOINTING INTEREST: *MAPPING 5* (2008-2009) BY KIM BOSKE

The case study in this chapter differs in several ways from those in the previous two chapters. Whereas *Werklust* by Baart and *Baumschule* by De Ruijter compare a new or alternative image to the collective visual memory of the place, the project *Mapping* by Kim Boske (b. 1978) conforms more to the formal conventions of the place. This chapter puts number five of this series central (fig. 4.1). Like the photographs by De Ruijter discussed in Chapter 3, the works in the *Mapping* series by Kim Boske are to be understood as singular art works. Boske produces them as such in monumental sizes and as refined, polished objects that are processed in the gallery and museum circuit as single, landscape artworks. *Mapping* presents a series of landscapes in which every image features a tree as a central component in the composition.

Although at first sight, or from a distance, Boske's pictures appear to be regular landscape pictures, made in relatively empty areas with sandy ground and heath alternating with woods, the appearance of the depicted nature is puzzling. The contours of the trees, bushes and woods and sometimes a passer-by, are not sharp but blurred. We see different versions of the branches of the trees depicted in various forms of contrast and transparency. What Boske does exactly is move around the tree in a circle, while taking several photographs of the same tree from different sides. She chooses her camera position, direction and the framing in such a way that quite traditional, centred compositions emerge, similar to those of the landscape painters of the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. In this regard, Boske's work is comparable with that of Baart, but different to that of De Ruijter, who, as shown in Chapter 3, applied an extremely vertical camera direction. Boske makes multiple exposures of the tree visible simultaneously, which has the surprising effect that the photographs of *Mapping* resemble paintings. It is this effect that is the focus of the discussion in this chapter and, in particular, the third section on the artist's photographic intervention.

The images in Boske's *Mapping* series make the photographed environment analogous with historical Dutch landscape paintings – even paintings of exactly the same place, as will be discussed in 4.2. This contributes to the making of place. Following the thoughts of Lorimer, Meinig, Mitchell and others, who understand landscape as a mental construction resulting from a process, namely the interaction between human activity and the physical landscape, I interpret Boske's process of photographing as a landscaping activity. By analysing what she literally does in the space, with her camera and in post-production, and the picture that this results in, I conclude that this contributes to the making of place of the area she photographed.



Fig. 4.1 Kim Boske, *Mapping 5*, 2008-2009, from the series *Mapping* (2008-2009), chromogenic print, mounted and framed, 50 x 75 cm, coll. Leiden University Library, PK-F-2018-0020.

While Baart worked in an area lacking visual history and formal/aesthetic conventions (newly won polder with only a brief history of being *land* at all) and De Ruijter, although working in an area with a rich pictorial history, chose an unusual part and aspect of the area, Boske works with highly valued, monumentalised landscapes that have a rich visual history and tradition of representation. Unlike Baart and De Ruijter, Boske does not juxtapose a contrasting image against the formal conventions of the place; rather, in a more affirmative way, she builds on and reinforces the meaning and identity of the place with her photographs.

In terms of it being a physical landscape, it has been transformed into heritage as nature reserve. It has been opened up for public consumption as 'beautiful landscape' and as a recreation area. In terms of art history, the geographical imagination of the area that Boske photographed was not initially established by seventeenth-century painting, as was the case in the river zone of De Ruijter's *Baumschule #2*. The area where Boske photographed was discovered in the nineteenth century by the painters of the Laren School,<sup>421</sup> and it is their paintings of bucolic heath scenery that determined the collective visual memory of the place. Unlike the previously discussed projects, Boske's *Mapping* series does not alter or break open this meaning of the place. Instead, it consolidates and strengthens a meaning that was already established by monumentalising the area as natural heritage and through art history. In the following three sections of this chapter, I will discuss how her photographs contribute to the construction of meaning of this place through the three, now familiar steps of georeferencing, geospecific and geogeneric comparison.

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<sup>421</sup> Raassen-Kruimel and Roodenburg-Schadd 2014.

#### 4.1 natural heritage of the Zuiderheide near Laren

The geotagging of the photograph *Mapping 5* had not already been done by the photographer, as was the case with Baart's *Werklust* and De Ruijter's *Baumschule #2*. When asked, the photographer revealed that she has documented the area where the photograph was taken as the Zuiderheide, but not the exact location of the tree. She does not see this as relevant information. In terms of the area, according to information provided by the photographer, the photograph was taken in the heath landscape of 't Gooi.<sup>422</sup> More precisely, the photographer has been working in heath fields located around the south-western side of the town of Laren, in the direction of Hilversum. Both towns are situated in this area called 't Gooi. This heathland consists of two parts: a section of 344 hectometres west of Laren called the Westerheide, and a southern section of 321 hectometres called the Zuiderheide.<sup>423</sup>

Further research leads to the information that the exact geographical location of the tree is situated in the Zuiderheide, at the coordinates:<sup>424</sup>

Longitude 5.213522

Latitude 52.233362

This is a point on the map, or, speaking in terms of Hackeloer, an exactly defined formal 0-dimensional location, indicated through the geographical co-ordinates in Google Maps in the images below<sup>425</sup> (Fig. 56).



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<sup>422</sup> Conversation with the photographer on 30 November 2016.

<sup>423</sup> The information is extracted from the public information website "Gooi en Vechtstreek", a collaboratively published website of nine communities in the area: <http://www.tgooi.info/natuur/westerheide.php>, accessed on 4 February 2017.

<sup>424</sup> Based on a combination of a Google Maps and Google Images search with a visit to the heath on 6 February 2017.

<sup>425</sup> Hackeloer 2014, p. 61.

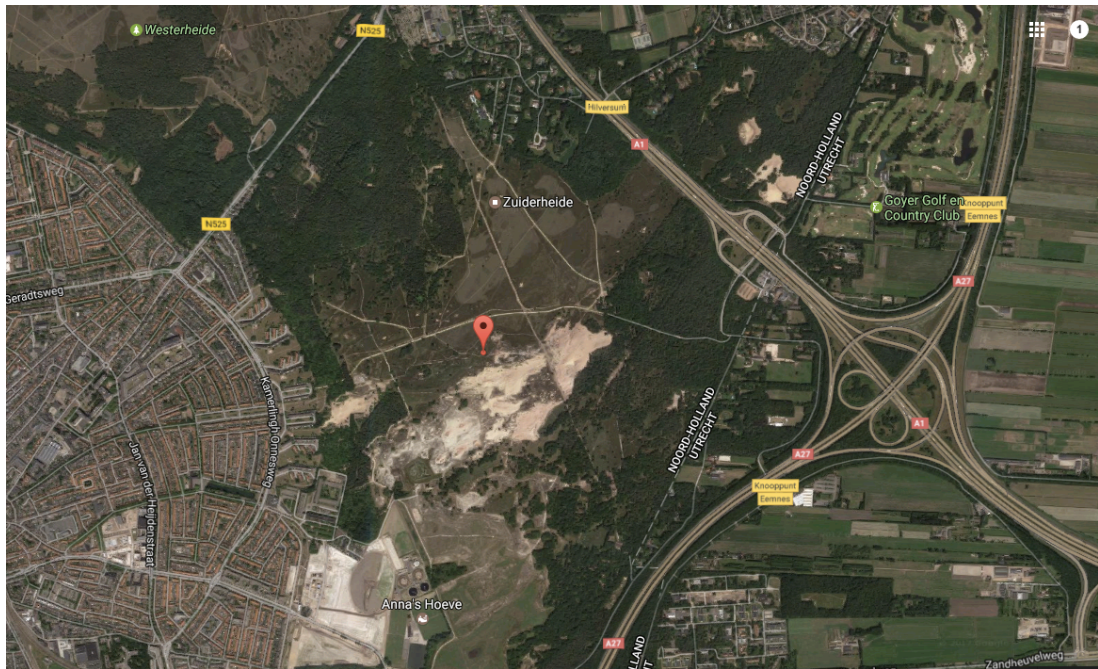


Fig. 4.2 Location within the Netherlands (with marker), near Amsterdam and within 't Gooi area and, specifically, the Zuiderheide, where Kim Boske took her photographs for *Mapping 5*.

To use the terminology of Hackeloer and others, this specific tree is not currently a POI (point of interest), which adds special meaning to the place. As we shall see, the outcome of my research is different depending on whether I research the represented place as a point or as an area. When I take the area of 't Gooi as a point of departure for this georeferencing, the artwork renders meaning to 't Gooi as a whole. When I identify the exact location of the artwork I can connect the cultural-historical information to the specific place, thus turning the tree within it into a POI, which can be visited and experienced on location.

Getty's Thesaurus of Geographic Names (TGN) uses the verbal description of the "Gooi" - in Dutch, it is generally "Het Gooi" or "'t Gooi". There are two Dutch regions with the name Gooi: the area near Laren, where Boske's photograph is taken, is situated in the province of Utrecht and, according to the TGN, has as unique identification code '7260057'.<sup>426</sup> The more specific geoterms of the 'Zuiderheide', where Boske has been making her photographs, is not discerned separately in the TGN. I can complete this exercise of geotagging the artwork by relating it to the ground, programmatic and spatial form of the physical landscape. Analogous with the interest from phenomenology, as formulated by Norberg-Schulz, for example in *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*, to understand the geological conditions that the landscape in the photograph relates to, I must first consider the ground form.<sup>427</sup>

In contrast to the polder of the Haarlemmermeer, which has only been dry land for a century

<sup>426</sup> There is also a 'Gooi' region in the province of Gelderland with a different number.

<sup>427</sup> Christian Norberg-Schulz in a passage on identification with the environment; Norberg-Schulz 1980 [1979], pp. 20-21.

and a half, the ground of 't Gooi has a long history. Indeed, the formation of the land dates back more than 500,000 years. Again, as in the case of *Baumschule #2*, European rivers flowing out towards the North Sea were determinant in this proces. It was the prehistoric Eridanos River that brought sand and gravel from the Baltic Sea to the North Sea area.<sup>428</sup> After Denmark was lifted, the Meuse and Rhine rivers also spent hundreds of thousands of years depositing sediments in this area. This sand and gravels was several shades of light brown that are still visible in the landscape of 't Gooi and the art works representing it. (Fig. 4.3)



Fig. 4.3 Section of the ground of 't Gooi with the shades of broken white to brown, typical of the sedimentary sands brought by rivers flowing from the north and east towards the North Sea area over thousands of years. Photo: IVN, source: <https://www.ivn.nl/afdeling/gooi-en-omstreken/geologie-van-het-gooi>

The foreground of Boske's *Mapping 5* photograph also shows these typical light beige patches, sand drifts in the landscape that move over the area, blown by the wind. The sand with this typical colour was brought here in the Pleistocene era by ice caps from Scandinavia, which pushed and shaped the ground of 't Gooi and caused its hilly surface, albeit the hills never exceed around 80 metres.

With regard to the programmatic form, the Zuiderheide has been a residential area since prehistoric times, as evidenced by archeological findings of vernacular objects as well as constructed

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<sup>428</sup> 'Geologie van het Gooi', information of the IVN instute for nature education and sustainability, <https://www.ivn.nl/afdeling/gooi-en-omstreken/geologie-van-het-gooi>, accessed on 6 February 2017.

hills.<sup>429</sup> Still visible – in fact, partly reconstructed for cultural-historical tourism – in the landscape are funerary hills and so-called *tafelbergen* ("table hills"), i.e. hills that were constructed for religious ceremonies. These originate from medieval civilisations – written sources which mention them go all the way back to around 900 AD.<sup>430</sup> These people lived as farmers who worked the land. Sheep were important domesticated animals that lived from the grasses of the heath land. They provided milk and meat, while the wool provided the raw material for intensive weaving activity and a textile industry. The Romans never resided in the area: they stopped their northbound expansion just a few kilometres south of 't Gooi, with the river Rhine as the northern border. Also, other peoples, like the Vikings, did not see the heath area of 't Gooi as a destination, primarily because the sandy, empty area had little to offer in terms of resources. The heath used to be much larger, but lost terrain to towns and infrastructure that were built in the environment.

At the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, awareness grew about the value of the natural beauty the area had to offer. Wealthy people took up residency in the different villages of the area and saw the heath as a delightful place for recreation. At the same time, the train and tram lines that were built in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, made the heath areas of 't Gooi accessible for people from the capital city of Amsterdam. Moreover, transportation over land, which connected the economically strong western part of the Netherlands and Amsterdam with, in particular, eastbound parts of the Netherlands and Germany, resulted in ever more highways, bridges and other infrastructure in the environment. They will grow to protect the heath areas of 't Gooi against urbanisation and suburbanisation.<sup>431</sup> This rise in urbanisation around the area where Kim Boske takes her photographs is clearly seen in the aerial photograph that is fig. 56.

'Being beautiful' has become a central concept in the function of the Zuiderheide as a landscape. The Zuiderheide has always served as a garden of delight for recreation in the urbanised zone of the western and middle Netherlands. The area is administered by a foundation that, in the nineteenth century, came into being as a planning authority. In Dutch, this authority is called the 'Schoonheidscommissie', which literally translates as 'Beauty Committee'. In 1932, this foundation became the Goois Natuurreservaat. In those days, a growing number of institutions were founded to protect biodiversity and natural beauty in the Dutch landscape. This beauty was discovered from the end of the nineteenth century and would be exploited for recreation and tourism. The most important of these foundations is Natuurmonumenten, established in 1904 by wealthy people in 't Gooi.<sup>432</sup>

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<sup>429</sup> 'Zuiderheide - Laren' on the website of the Goois Natuurreservaat, the administration that manages the area. <https://gnr.nl/de-natuur-in/gebieden/zuiderheide/>, accessed on 6 February 2017.

<sup>430</sup> Schuyf 1995, pp. 57-59.

<sup>431</sup> 'History' in the 'About us' section of the website of the Goois Natuurreservaat, the nature reserve that administers the area. <https://gnr.nl/de-natuur-in/gebieden/zuiderheide/>, accessed on 6 February 2017.

<sup>432</sup> Dutch dignitary Jac P. Thijsse put in epic efforts around 1904 to protect the Naardermeer against the plan to turn the lake into a rubbish dump for Amsterdam. His pioneering activism resulted in the foundation in 1904 of the first Dutch nature reserve organisation: Natuurmonumenten. The modus operandi of this foundation is typical of the wealthy people who established it. Through crowdfunding among their members they succeeded in buying the area of the Naardermeer, thus protecting it from its earlier fate. See Dik van der Meulen in Bekke-Proost 2015, p. 190-191.



The Goois Natuurreservaat, as its own information explains, 'cares for the natural beauty' of the area.<sup>433</sup> After having been a residential area for farmers who grew vegetables and kept sheep, its ultimate purpose was to become an area of natural beauty to be enjoyed by tourists and holidaymakers. The caretakers of the Goois Natuurreservaat implement an intensive programme of forest and heath management that is easily interpreted as an ongoing process of what Mitchell calls landscaping, what Steenbergen and Reh articulate as gardening and what Tuan and Creswell describe as place making.<sup>434</sup>

The nature care includes, among other things, protecting the flora, chopping trees and programmes of cattle keeping. Flocks of sheep are kept not only for grazing the grass, which conserves the heath, but also because they are beautiful and represent the traditional function and cultural history of the land. More recently, the Scottish Highlander cow has been introduced into the landscape: this animal turned out to be suited to protecting the heath against the encroaching of surrounding woodlands because they eat the young saplings. Maintaining the beauty of the area requires a number of special measures; for example, discussions are currently ongoing regarding the Scottish Highlander threatening the life of the pheasant, because the cow demolishes the places the birds use to hide from foxes. This has been seen as an unwanted development because pheasants are seen as part of the traditional concept of the heath's beauty. The threat to the lives of rabbits, also due to the cows destroying holes that rabbits hide in, plus the fact that it has become easier for hawks to see rabbits is considered another negative consequence. Despite this, arguments for nature care won out over those for maintaining traditional scenic beauty and the 'strange' Scottish Highlander is now an accepted new element in the bucolic landscape of the Zuiderheide.<sup>435</sup>

Considering the spatial form, as explained before, the Zuiderheide is situated in an urban area that continues to experience intensive industrial activity and urbanisation. From almost every part of the heath, some trace of civilisation can be seen on the horizon, above the woods, be it a tower, a block of flats or a telecommunications mast. These structures serve to remind ramblers that daily life borders the natural scene. Moreover, within the urbanised area of 't Gooi, the heath links up to other heath areas: the Westerheide and the Bussumerheide to its west, and the woods of Lage Vuursche to its southeast. The highways A1, A27 and N525 mark the borders between the Zuiderheide and the other natural areas and to the south-west is the town of Hilversum. Within the borders of the Zuiderheide, the spatial form is filled with flora, generally areas of heath alternating with woodlands. A large sand drift is situated in the middle of the Zuiderheide. The tree in Kim Boske's photograph is at the north-western border of this sand drift. A quite dense network of foot and cycle paths, which opens up the heath to walkers and cyclists for experiencing its natural beauty during their leisure time, further characterises the spatial form of the Zuiderheide.

The characterisation of the Zuiderheide area of Boske's *Mapping 5* becomes clearer when I

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<sup>433</sup> 'History' in the 'About us' section of the website of the Goois Natuurreservaat, the nature reserve that administers the area. <https://gnr.nl/de-natuur-in/gebieden/zuiderheide/>, accessed on 6 February 2017.

<sup>434</sup> See my discussion in 1.2.2 of this dissertation.

<sup>435</sup> 'History' in the 'About us' section of the website of the Goois Natuurreservaat, the nature reserve that administers the area. <https://gnr.nl/de-natuur-in/gebieden/zuiderheide/>, accessed on 6 February 2017.

compare the area to the landscapes of the photographic projects discussed in the previous chapters. The Zuiderheide is not an intensely exploited utilitarian area like the Haarlemmermeer polder (Baart) or the agricultural zone for industrialised tree growing in the Betuwe (De Ruijter). Instead, the ancient function of small-scale farming and sheep keeping, which has been typical for the heathland of the Zuiderheide for centuries, has been monumentalised and made into natural historic heritage by turning the zone into a nature reserve. This is what keeps the area an empty heath landscape where the memory of simple agricultural life is kept alive, protected against urbanisation that is advancing and encroaching from all sides. People deliberately come to this heath for leisure activities like cycling and to enjoy its natural beauty and – through cultural-historical information and activities provided by the nature reserve organisation – to relive the memory of the simple and ancient life of farmers and shepherds. And these are the reasons why the artist Kim Boske chose this location: she had been hiking there with her parents and other family members and taken many Sunday morning strolls in the area. The fact that the heath was a location where she experienced blissfully happy contact with nature, and the trees were the landscape features that she had run around as a child, was the point of departure for the artist in her making of *Mapping 5*.

#### 4.2 collective visual memory of the Larense School

Having considered the 'ground form', the 'programmatic form' and the 'spatial form' in the process of georeferencing *Mapping 5*, I now proceed to geospecific comparison on the level of Steenbergen and Reh's image form. For this step, I will compare Boske's photograph with earlier pictures of Zuiderheide. Recalling what I wrote in paragraph 1.3.2, the theoretical basis for this geospecific comparison is Krauss's theory that photographs of places do not obtain their meaning in an isolated way, but rather in their *discursive space* and relationship with other images, which together form significant 'points of interest' in a place.<sup>436</sup> Schwartz and Ryan's theory on collectively kept and shared photography establishing a geographical imagination is relevant here, as is what Wells refers to as the formal and aesthetic conventions of a place.<sup>437</sup>

While looking for what Krauss called the centring of attention around 'points of interest' in landscape photography, in the case of the Zuiderheide, where Boske photographed, we find a totally different situation to that of the Haarlemmermeer in Baart's *Werklust*.<sup>438</sup> While the relatively new land of the Haarlemmermeer has few formal and aesthetic conventions, the heath area near Laren has a long and rich tradition of being visualised and quite explicit pictorial conventions. Specifically, this area has been the workplace of an artists' movement known as the painterly School of Laren.<sup>439</sup> They made numerous paintings, which, collectively, determine the geographical imagination and the formal and

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<sup>436</sup> Krauss 1985, p. 141.

<sup>437</sup> In Schwartz and Ryan 2003 and Wells 2011, respectively.

<sup>438</sup> See for Krauss on 'points of interest': Krauss 1985, p. 140.

<sup>439</sup> See Raassen-Kruimel and Roodenburg-Schadd 2014.

aesthetic conventions of the place.<sup>440</sup> Many of these paintings are still cherished in the neighbourhood of the area where Boske took her photographs. The local Singer Museum in the town of Laren, which keeps an important collection of the Larense School heritage, can easily be visited on the same day as taking a stroll over the heath.<sup>441</sup> The heath area and the way painters in the past have imagined it are easily perceived in association with each other.

The Laren school of painters (in Dutch known as the 'Larense School') is partly connected to the previously mentioned Hague School.<sup>442</sup> Painters who, earlier in the nineteenth century, had been part of the artistic movement in The Hague, later belonged to the School of Laren. For example, the Hague painter Jozef Israëls (1824-1911) and his son Isaac Israëls (1865-1934), first 'discovered' Laren in 1870. In those days, it was still difficult to reach Laren. First, one had to travel to the town of Hilversum, southwest of Laren and the heath of Zuiderheide. From there, a carriage could take the visitor to Laren, a journey over the bumpy ground and paths between the Westerheide and Zuiderheide, where, more than a hundred years later, Kim Boske made her photographs.<sup>443</sup>

An example of this work is Jozef Israëls's painting *The Late Hour* (Fig. 4.4).



Fig. 4.4 Jozef Israëls, *The Late Hour*, between 1880 and 1896, oil on canvas, 92 x 168 cm, coll. Singer Museum, Laren (loan from the National Heritage Agency)

Central in this painting is the atmosphere of the wide heath landscape of the Zuiderheide, which is dramatically rendered through the choice for dusk as the moment of the day and the rising moon. The woman was probably returning home after a long day's work. Long walks through the landscape were

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<sup>440</sup> The term geographical imagination comes from Schwartz and Ryan 2003, whereas Liz Wells provided the terms of formal and aesthetic conventions in Wells 2011, see p. 10.

<sup>441</sup> The Singer collection, which forms the heart of the museum, was founded by American painter and art collector William Singer, who, after moving from Washington DC to Paris in 1901, decided to move to and live in the artists' colony of Laren in 1902. Source: Singer Museum on its corporate website: [www.singerlaren.nl/bezoek/over\\_ons](http://www.singerlaren.nl/bezoek/over_ons).

<sup>442</sup> See Emke Raassen-Kruimel 'Laren in het voetspoor van de Haagse School' ('Laren in the footsteps of the Hague School'), in: Raassen-Kruimel and Roodenburg-Schadd 2014, pp. 13-15.

<sup>443</sup> The information about the transportation means to Laren, from: Emke Raassen-Kruimel 'Laren in het voetspoor van de Haagse School' ('Laren in the footsteps of the Hague School'), in: Raassen-Kruimel and Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd 2014, p. 14.

normal in those days. Walking was the common way of moving around in times when the alternatives were boating, which, of course, was only possible where there was water, or being driven in a carriage, which was generally a privilege of the upper class and, in any case, difficult due to the rough terrain and bumpy roads of the heath. The female figure in the scenery invites the viewer to identify with her position in the landscape and, through her, feel what the atmosphere of the place must have been when walking there at that hour of the day.

Father and son Israëls enthusiastically informed their fellow Hague painters and soon Albert Neuhuys and Anton Mauve followed. The scenic beauty of the heath of 't Gooi was praised by the painters. On 3 June 1882, having come to live in Laren, Anton Mauve, one of the key artists of the Larense School, wrote to his wife about the beauty of the surrounding landscape:

[...] it is movingly beautiful here, everything radiates a refinement of lines and a sweet poetry, interiors, roads, acres, beautiful heath and groves and the people are of the sweetest kind one can think of. [...]<sup>444</sup>

The beauty Mauve describes is the beauty that is now preserved for recreation purposes by the nature reserve of the Goois Natuureservaat.

In the nineteenth century, the development of Laren as an artists' village was further enhanced by a technical and infrastructural phenomenon. In 1882, a railway was constructed, connecting Amsterdam with Laren directly.<sup>445</sup> The so-called Gooise Stoomtram ('Gooi Steam Tram') brought visitors from the Dutch capital city directly to the centre of Laren. This intensified the stream of visitors to Laren escaping the heat of the city for cool spots on the heath. Among them were artists of the Hague School, some of whom, like Anton Mauve in 1882, eventually came to live there.

What the artists discovered in the surroundings of Laren was a combination of the wide heath landscape and a sober way of life in close contact with nature. This is an aspect also found in the painting *Peat smoker on the heath near Laren* (s.d. [1903-1906]) by Gerrit van Blaaderen, which puts the atmosphere of the heath landscape - where Kim Boske photographed little more than a century later - central. The viewer is invited to experience this through the figure of a man, engrossed in tending to a fire (Fig. 4.5).

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<sup>444</sup> [...] 't Is aandoenlijk mooi hier, van een fijnheid van lijnen en lieflijke poëzie straalt uit alles, binnenhuizen, wegen, akkers, prachtige heide en boschjes en de mensen is van het liefste soort dat te bedenken is. Raassen-Kruimel 2015, p. 24. Translation MvdH.

<sup>445</sup> Raassen-Kruimel and Caroline Roodenburg-Schadd 2014, pp. 13-14.



Fig. 4.5 Gerrit van Blaaderen, *Peat smoker on the heath near Laren* (s.d. [1903-1906]), oil on canvas, 70 x 130 cm, private collection (courtesy art gallery J. van den Elshout, Kwintsheul)

In my further geospecific comparison of the formal and aesthetic conventions of depicting the Zuiderheide near Laren, we see that while the photographs by Boske show only the landscape, sometimes with a passer-by, small and barely visible in a far corner, in contrast, the paintings by artists from the Laren School frequently feature figures. The Laren School did not paint the heath purely as beautiful nature. They were also depicting the landscape because it stood for a simple life. Indeed, the artists were charmed by the people who worked hard but lived in poverty, still wearing traditional costume and wooden shoes. Life around Laren was closely connected to nature and the landscape, agriculture, the keeping of sheep and the manual processing of the products of their farming. It is the memory of this sober life in close harmony with nature that is preserved in the combination of the natural heritage of the Zuiderheide, the sheep flocks near Laren and the artistic heritage of the Laren School of painters housed in the local museum.

In the so-called genre scenes of the Laren School, the landscape forms the main subject of the painting, but they also feature small-scale scenes of everyday life. Popular among these artists were domesticated scenes depicting the activities of women, such as raising the children, needlework or processing the sheeps' wool that their men kept outside. The walking of the flock brought the shepherd into close contact with the wide and desolated landscape of the heath, and this was another popular theme among the painters.

In 1887, Anton Mauve made a painting in which a flock of sheep is a central theme. (Fig. 4.6) The colours and the shapes of the sheep and the flock merge wonderfully with the colours and the shapes of the heath landscape, with the shepherd quietly lingering in the middle of it. It visually emphasises how man is closely connected with nature in this way of life.



Fig. 4.6 Anton Mauve, *Heath near Laren*, 1887, oil on canvas, 77 x 104 cm, collection Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, SK-A-2430.

Besides the beauty of the nature of the Zuiderheide, discussed in the framework of the ground form in 4.1, it is also this association with the humble farmer's or shepherd's 'way of life' that determines the geographical imagination of the heath landscape near Laren. The local Singer Museum has a permanent exhibition featuring the paintings of the Laren School, which can easily be visited 'in situ' by inhabitants and visiting tourists. Furthermore, the memory of keeping sheep is kept alive through publications, tourist information and the traditional sheepfold that has been reconstructed in the neighbourhood. This is a tourist attraction, where daily the leaving and returning of the sheep with their shepherd can be observed. It is a popular destination for families during Sunday strolls and, for example, in June festivities are organised during which the public can learn hands-on about traditional manual sheep shearing.

Touristic visual communication on the heath of 't Gooi makes use of the formal and aesthetic conventions of the Laren School of painting, which associates the minds of the viewer and visitor with the paintings by these artists and, in turn, with the idealised past of the area and its farmers', shepherds' and weavers' communities. (Fig. 4.7)



Wat ▾

Maak een keuze om de resultaten te verfijnen

## Schaapskudde van het Goois Natuurreservaat

Kinderfeestjes, Schaapskudde

De kudde, 50 schapen, vertrekt om ca. 08.00 uur uit de schaapskooi en is in het natuurgebied te bezichtigen. Terugkomst om ca. 16.00 uur. De schaapskooi is zondagmiddag te bezichtigen.



Fig. 4.7 webpage with tourist information on the nature reserve of the heath area of 't Gooi. The Dutch text reads:

"Sheep flock of the Gooi Nature Reserve; The flock, 50 sheep, leaves around 8:00am from the sheep fold and can be visited in the nature reserve. Return around 4:00pm. The sheep fold can be visited on Sunday afternoons."<sup>446</sup>

This geographical imagination of an idealised past of humble men, living in close harmony with nature, is communicated and commemorated in these cultural-historical publications and activities around the landscape near Laren, and played a role in the painting by artists of the Laren School, like the above picture by Anton Mauve. To speak to the theory on landscape representation of Cosgrove and Daniels, the representation of the landscape of the heath areas of 't Gooi is generally multilayered: the physical landscape is represented and to be experienced in such a way that the association of scenic beauty and simple farming life is the predominant meaning. The landscape represented by the Laren School of painting, kept as heritage near the landscape in the Singer Museum, visually communicates this same meaning although in the medium of painting.

Compared to Mauve's first painting of a sheep flock (cf. fig. 4.6), Boske's photograph shares the

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<sup>446</sup> It is the website of the 'VVV' national tourist organisation, which has local departments, this one being of the 'Gooi & Vechtstreek', the area of Gooi and the nearby river Vecht. <http://www.vvvgooivecht.nl/en/activiteitenkaart/detail/schaapskudde-van-het-goois-natuurreservaat--fc791c04-5717-4119-b72b-0ce95331a547> accessed on 22 March 2017.

compositional element of the trees (albeit a single tree in the case of Boske's picture) on the horizon, which form a silhouette against the sky. Furthermore, in both Mauve's painting and Boske's photograph, the composition is strongly determined by the large area of light brown sand in the foreground. As I have learned in the study of the ground form of the whole Gooi area (see paragraph 4.1), the colour of the sand is a result of the local geological history and characteristic of sand in that area.<sup>447</sup> This characteristic of the ground form is dominant in the image form as well, in both the nineteenth-century painting by Anton Mauve and the twenty-first-century photograph by Kim Boske.

Comparing the painting by Mauve with the photograph by Boske, I see similarities in the tableau-like size of the artworks. Both painting and photograph have large proportions and are executed in a refined technique in order to be hung as an artwork on the wall. They resemble each other remarkably in terms of composition and the blurred/painterly style and colours. In fact, 130 years after these nineteenth-century painters depicted nature, a comparable result is being achieved through photography.

Although in earlier times, there were photographs taken of the heath of 't Gooi, none resembled the Laren School paintings: photographs in earlier times were often black and white, were smaller in size and executed in straight photography, which resulted in detailed imagery with sharp contours. Although in the history of landscape photography, specific printing techniques – especially by pictorialists – were used to evoke a poetic mood, they never reached the brush-stroke like blurriness that Boske has achieved through her technique. The true colours in addition to the tableau-like size, give the image a painterly look that brings the work very close to a painted landscape of the Laren School. Thus, Boske visually builds on these formal and aesthetic conventions of this place.

It is tempting to consider the works by Boske in terms of still representation, in the way Cosgrove and Daniels write in *The Iconography of Landscape* about the relation between the physical landscape - which is preserved as a nature reserve - and its artistic representation as a static one.<sup>448</sup> However, in order to keep pace with the theoreticians of the more-than-representational movement within cultural geography, like Creswell and Lorimer, I suggest interpreting the activities that keep the natural- and cultural-historic memories of the nature reserve of the Zuiderheide alive as a process.<sup>449</sup> This process, which includes, among other things, the nature reserve manager keeping sheep and cattle, is comparable to an intense process of gardening – which is also about maintaining a nature reserve. These processes are precise examples of the interaction between human life and land, in this process of working and reworking of the land - called 'landscaping' by Mitchell - we create, recreate and maintain the meaning landscape has for its inhabitants or users.<sup>450</sup> The repeated visualisation of the landscape in painting and photography is part of this process, to which *Mapping 5* by Boske is a recent

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<sup>447</sup> The ground form is extracted from the four-layer system that is used by the Delft University of Technology, see Steenbergen and Reh 2003, p. 384. See my discussion in 1.2.3 and my use of it for analysis of landscape photography in 1.3.1 and 1.3.2 of this dissertation.

<sup>448</sup> Cosgrove and Daniels 1988, Introduction, p. 1.

<sup>449</sup> Creswell 2004; Lorimer 2005, pp. 84-86.

<sup>450</sup> Mitchell in *Landscape and Power*, Mitchell 2002 [1994], p. 1.



addition.

To return to the theory of Schwartz and Ryan on geographical imagination, I realise that Boske's *Mapping 5* affirms the imagination that already existed of the place. The heath of the Zuiderheide had already been discovered in the nineteenth century by artists of the then Hague School, but later the Laren School of painting. The way these painters imagined the area and the way of life of its inhabitants, supported or even contributed to the transformation of the Zuiderheide into a natural monument - while its way of life is made into cultural heritage by the sheep flock which is still being kept, and which is visited by tourists. The Zuiderheide and the heath of 't Gooi in general form the environment where Boske went hiking with her family as a child. While weighing up which landscape to choose as the subject for her art, searching for the place most dear to her, Boske's thoughts and feelings led her to this landscape of her childhood.<sup>451</sup> Thus, during shared happy moments of recreation, the artist had experienced the landscape of the Zuiderheide as a nature reserve, which, in its turn, preserved the scenic beauty and associated memory of rural past life. The photographs embody a confirmation of this geographical imagination, of the collective visual memory of these formal and aesthetic conventions of the place.<sup>452</sup> To quote another writer in the book by Schwartz and Ryan on geographical imagination: Maria Pelizzari speaks of 'guidebook engagement' and 'acts of confirmation' when indicating the phenomenon that photographers stay close and faithful to landscape that touristic information has already made into cultural heritage.<sup>453</sup> This is certainly true of Boske's choice for the heath near Laren.

Furthermore, as we will see in the next section, although the photo works by Boske are singular, still works of art, they in fact represent a process, because they show different pictures taken over time of the same scene simultaneously. In other words, the photoworks of Boske are cumulative pictures, images, taken over a period of time, that overlay each other. This is clear in *Mapping 5*, which is the subject of this chapter, but also in the other photoworks from the *Mapping* series (Fig. 4.8). Each of the photoworks in this series embodies a performance-like activity, executed by the artist on that spot. This aspect also calls for a discussion of Boske's work in terms of the more-than-representational theory from cultural geography in which the construction of the meaning of landscape is understood to result from the *process* of interaction between man and land. This will be the subject of the next section 4.3.

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<sup>451</sup> The artist made this and the following remarks during a conversation in her studio on 30 November 2016.

<sup>452</sup> 'Geographical imagination' being the term used by Schwartz and Ryan throughout their book *Picturing Place* (2003), while 'formal and aesthetic conventions' is terminology from Wells 2011.

<sup>453</sup> See Maria Pelizzari, chapter 2, 'Retracing the Outlines of Rome: Intertextuality and Imaginative Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Photographs', in Schwartz and Ryan 2003, pp. 62-63.

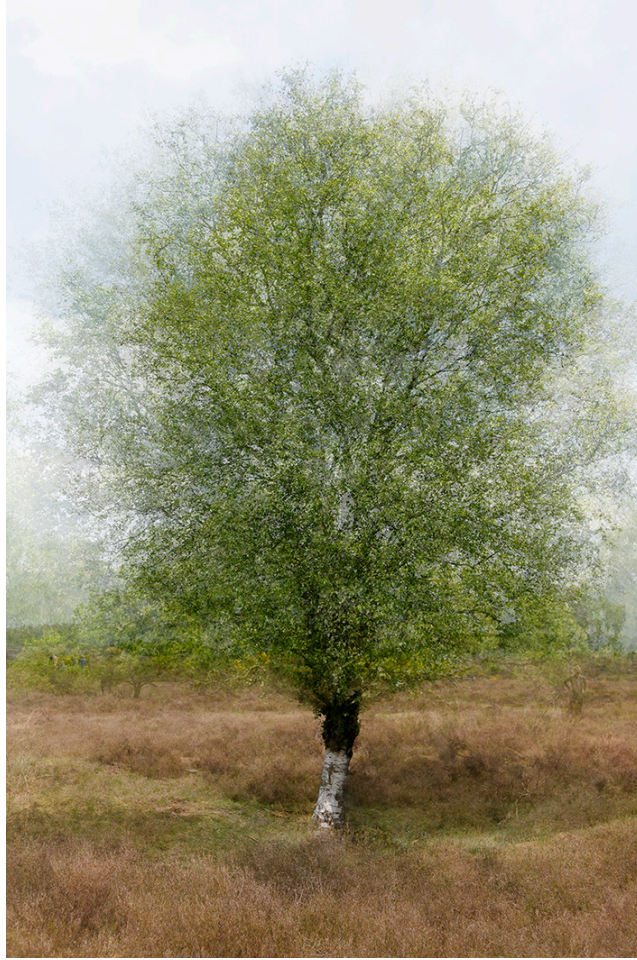


Fig. 4.8 Kim Boske, *Mapping 13*, 2012  
chromogenic print, 123 x 83 cm, coll. the artist

#### 4.3 circumambulation, inverted panorama, simultaneity and the generic

Having compared the landscape photograph *Mapping 5* to the collective visual memory and the geographical imagination of the place, the next step in geogeneric comparison is meant to compare her work with pictures of other places, but featuring landscapes of the same *type*. As said, when discussing in 1.2.3 the book *Picturing Place* by Schwartz and Ryan and especially the essay included in it by M. Christine Boyer, photography has the possibility to imbue a place with 'reverie' of other, better places.<sup>454</sup> One way of joining one place with another is by making it share characteristics with these other, more generic places. To apply the term 'characterisation', as introduced by Snyder and Allen in 1975 in 'Photography, Vision, Representation': Boske gives a characterisation of the place of 't Gooi heath by making the place look more generic, i.e. the imagery of the heath that we know from the Laren School of painting.

This perspective helps us to understand the artist's intervention, which she uses to problematise

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<sup>454</sup> M. Christine in Schwartz and Ryan, p. 53.

the making of place of 't Gooi heath through her photography. In the previous chapters, geogeneric comparison was done with imagery of the same landscape type but situated elsewhere. This was necessary because the photographs by Baart and De Ruijter did *not* resemble the formal and aesthetic conventions of earlier imagery of the same place - the Haarlemmermeer and the river landscape near Rhenen, Kesteren and Opheusden respectively. Indeed, Baart and De Ruijter juxtaposed a different image to what was known before. This is different in the case of Boske's *Mapping* series and, in particular, *Mapping 5*, which bears a remarkable resemblance to past paintings of the same area by artists from the Laren School.

They share similar subject matters, composition and colours, as well as a style in which the blurred contours in Boske's photographs resemble the painterly brushstrokes in the paintings of the Laren School. The geospecific comparison of Kim Boske's photographs with the similar looking formal and aesthetic conventions of the place has already been informative in terms of the way Boske makes place with her pictures. The geogeneric comparison with comparable imagery but of different places, which will be done in this section, elaborates this understanding further.

As we have seen, Boske's *Mapping* landscape photographs are made in the Zuiderheide, which forms part of the larger 'Goois Natuurreservaat'. This is a protected nature reserve that conserves the scenic beauty of the area, which is closely associated with the traditional rural life of farmers and shepherds. The reconstructed sheep fold, the cultural-historic tourist information and activities in the area contribute to the meaning of the heath zone of the Zuiderheide, as do Laren School paintings, which depict nineteenth- and early twentieth-century authentic life in the area and which are cherished locally in the Singer Museum. As a child, the artist immersed herself in this geographical imagination and the associated meanings during leisure activities there with her parents.

The visual communication in the photography of the reserve (fig. 4.7) suggests that wandering joyously over the heath is associated with the authentic life of the people who lived there in the past, like the shepherd tending his flock. The motive that resonates in Boske's photographs is very old and can be traced back to nineteenth-century landscape paintings of the French Barbizon School, which heavily influenced the Laren School of painting.<sup>455</sup> Initially, Barbizon artists inspired the Dutch artists of the Hague School, many of whom moved to Laren later in the nineteenth century, following in the footsteps of painters like Jozef and Isaac Israëls and Anton Mauve. It is useful to examine further how this motive migrated from the Barbizon School of painting to inspire the Hague and the Laren Schools, ultimately making place of the heath of 't Gooi.

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<sup>455</sup> See Jones 2008.



Fig. 4.9 Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot, *Fontainebleau - Oak Trees at Bas-Bréau*, 1832 or 33, oil on paper laid down on wood, 39,7 x 49,5 cm, coll. Metropolitan Museum of Art

The same motives that I have spoken of in relation to the Laren School, like the simple farmers' life, the working on the land, living close to nature and the beauty of the landscape are clearly visible in earlier French paintings by Barbizon artists. In the work of the painters like Jeanne-Baptiste Corot (1796-1875) (fig. 62) and Jean-Francois Millet (1814-1875), the woods and fields of Fontainebleau were the subject of the innovative painting of the artists who resided there, just like those Dutch painters who moved to the village of Laren. The flocks of sheep with their shepherd is a motive shared by the aforementioned French and Dutch schools.

This motive is particularly prevalent in paintings from the second half of the nineteenth century. Artists took an interest in what they saw as the authentic, sober lives of simple people. This can be viewed as early socialist tendencies and was similarly depicted in relation to life in cities. In particular, the lives of poor farmers, shepherds and - near the coasts - fishermen were chosen as subjects for such works of art. Artists found these lifestyles in different types of landscapes. Vincent van Gogh is probably the most famous of those artists depicting simple life in the rural areas of the Netherlands. He worked intensively in the province of Noord-Brabant, in the south of the Netherlands for several years, but also in other poor, rural areas Van Gogh found poor farmers, the paintings of whom now attract hundreds of thousands of visitors every year from all over the world. (Fig. 4.10)



Fig. 4.10 Vincent van Gogh, *Two women in the peat*, Nieuw-Amsterdam (North of the Netherlands in the province of Drenthe), October 1883, oil on canvas, 27,8 x 36,5 cm, coll. Van Goghmuseum, Amsterdam, inv. no s0129V1962.

The theme of the simple life of farmers and the pure, unspoilt mentality of people living remote from luxury in close harmony with nature recurs in a letter that Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother in 1881:

Diggers, sowers, ploughers, men and women I must now draw constantly. Examine and draw everything that's part of a peasant's life. Just as many others have done and are doing.<sup>456</sup>

By 'others', Van Gogh may have been referring to Anton Mauve, a painter of the Hague School, which is known to be a great inspiration to Van Gogh, and who founded the Laren School of painters in the 1870s in the area where Kim Boske made her *Mapping* photographs. Van Gogh and Mauve were in close contact in those days; indeed, Mauve advised Van Gogh in painterly matters, and, for example, wrote instructions to him about how to depict figures in a field.<sup>457</sup> As to the addition of the human figures in the landscape, it is interesting to read what Van Gogh writes about his shift in interest from landscapes to the farmers who move around and work in it: 'As regards landscape, I maintain that that should by no means have to suffer on account of it. On the contrary, it will gain by it.'<sup>458</sup> Apparently, Van Gogh thought the addition of the farmers made the meaning of the landscape painting more intense or explicit. This connects to the opinions of cultural geographers like Creswell, who think the meaning of landscape is formed by the way people use the land.<sup>459</sup>

The geogeneric comparison has led us from the Laren School of painting, which is connected to the specific area where *Mapping 5* was made, to the School of Barbizon, the Hague School of painting

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<sup>456</sup> Letter from Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, mid-September 1881, Van Gogh Letters no. 172, Amsterdam, coll. Van Gogh Museum, inv. no. b170 a-b V/1962. Translation Michael Hoyle/Van Gogh Museum/Vincent Van Gogh The Letters project, <http://vangoghletters.org>.

<sup>457</sup> Letter from Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, Friday 28 August 1881, Van Gogh Letters no. 171, Amsterdam, coll. Van Gogh Museum, inv. no. b169 V/1962.

<sup>458</sup> Letter from Vincent van Gogh to his brother Theo, mid-September 1881, Van Gogh Letters no. 172, Amsterdam, coll. Van Gogh Museum, inv. no. b170 a-b V/1962.

<sup>459</sup> Creswell 2004, pp. 7-9.

and the work of Vincent van Gogh, and also to a better understanding of the association with the simple life of a shepherd. Although in the pre-socialist sentiment this simple life was often depicted negatively and in terms of poverty and hardship - especially emphasised in the work of Vincent van Gogh - there is also a more positive and lighthearted vision of the shepherds' fields. The heath of the shepherd - in this case the Zuiderheid - exists in a more positive tradition of images of bucolic landscape.

Considering the bucolic landscape of the shepherd as the geographical imagination of the heath where Kim Boske made her photographs for *Mapping*, we can trace the roots of its formal and aesthetic conventions back to Italian Renaissance art theory, in which, for example, the art historian Ernst Gombrich has situated the rise of the bucolic landscape in art.<sup>460</sup> As early as 1450, Alberti's *Ten Books on Architecture* promoted the depiction of 'the delightful countryside, harbours, fishing, hunting, swimming, the games of shepherds' to decorate buildings and interiors. The life of peasants, writes Alberti, is the most pleasing to see and has a positive psychological effect on the viewer: it makes the beholder feel good.<sup>461</sup> Also Karel van Mander, in his *Schilder-boeck* of 1604 writes about bucolic joys in the countryside. He suggests evoking joy in the landscape by referring to Tityre and Amaryllis, and sitting under a beech tree making pleasant sounds (on the pan flute) for one's flock.<sup>462</sup> One could also be involved in amorous matters like seducing farm girls and 'unleashing their hands from their duties in the land'.<sup>463</sup>

While suggesting that a motive of ancient bucolic fields resonates in Boske's photograph, we can follow these themes in the texts of Van Mander, who - quoting the Roman poet Vergil - writes about the herd figure of Tityre and his beloved girl Amarillys. Referring to the work of the Roman painter Ludius, Van Mander suggests introducing human figures strolling and wandering in the countryside, or, as he puts it, 'scattered over the water' as a mode of recreation.<sup>464</sup> Alternatively, it would be a good idea to depict them as active in the earthly landscape loading carts, or to add animals like donkeys, and other elements that touch on farm life. Figures could also be involved in angling or hunting hares, deer or swine. To emphasise the pleasantries of these scenes, Van Mander suggests taking the example of Ludius and sometimes adding humorous elements to landscapes, like people slipping on a muddy path.<sup>465</sup>

*Mapping 5*, which is meant to hang in people's homes, builds on this ancient and bucolic tradition through the 'reverie' of the heath landscape of 't Gooi, with its farmers and shepherds. The joy of the shepherd's life thus can be traced back to Vergil's *Bucolica* (42-39 b.C.), which, in turn, is inspired by the *Eidyllia* ('Idylls', short poetic dialogues on joyful scenes from the lives of shepherds), by Theocritus (ca. 300-250 B.C.), a poet from Greek Antiquity. The fact that Boske herself made this

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<sup>460</sup> See Gombrich's 1966 essay 'The Renaissance Theory of Art and the Rise of Landscape'. Gombrich 1966, pp. 107-121.

<sup>461</sup> All of this passage, see Gombrich 1966, p. 111.

<sup>462</sup> Mander 1604, hoofdstuk 8, vs 42.

<sup>463</sup> Hier latet Boersch Meyskens handen ontstijven, van den bootskens in't Landtschap.' Mander 1604, hoofdstuk 8, vs 41-42.

<sup>464</sup> Mander 1604, hoofdstuk 8, vs 44.

<sup>465</sup> Ibidem, vs 45-46.

photowork on the basis of her own childhood memories of happily strolling over the heath during leisure time, underlines this argument.<sup>466</sup>

With a long history in painting, the bucolic life motive also entered photography in examples much closer to Boske's photoworks of *Mapping* than the paintings from antiquity.<sup>467</sup> Early pioneering examples in the Netherlands date from the early 1860s. The North-Holland town of Haarlem, which interestingly had also been the basis of the famous seventeenth-century Dutch landscape painters like Jacob van Ruisdael, was the place where the photographers Munnich & Ermerins had their studio for the short period eighteen months.<sup>468</sup> Typical of the *métier* at that time, they were not professional photographers - the profession barely had official status then. They came from totally different backgrounds: Johannes Theodorus Munnich (1812-1878) was a mathematician and physicist, while Robbert Carel Ermerins (1829-1907) was a lawyer.

From 18 October 1860 until 31 December 1861 they formed an official partnership under the name 'Photographisch Etablissement Munnich & Ermerins'. Although their enterprise stopped after little more than a year, due to a lack of commercial success and disagreements between the business partners, they form a rare example in the Netherlands of professional photographers with internationally oriented ambitions who also deliberately chose for the genre of landscape.<sup>469</sup> They made some remarkable examples of artistic landscape photography in which the bucolic motive emerged.

From May through August 1861, during the active period of their studio, three of their photographs hung in Paris on the fourth Salon of the Société Française de la Photographie. Among these was a *Vue prise dans les dunes près de Harlem* ('View taken in the dunes near Haarlem'). Although this photograph has not yet been identified precisely, it might well have been a landscape of the kind seen in fig. 4.11. They also made other landscapes in and around Haarlem, which were clearly inspired by historic Dutch landscape paintings. The cottage and the bark in the photograph (fig. 64) refer to leisure activities in the landscape - the same bucolic motive that is immanent in the heath of the photograph by Kim Boske. This remarkable, early example by Munnich & Ermerins of serious landscape photography turned out to be a rare exception in the world of nineteenth-century Dutch photography. Arguably, the work of Louis Apol, mentioned in Chapter 3 of this dissertation during a discussion of *Baumschule #3* by De Ruijter, is an exception, but his photographs were meant to be sketches for his paintings, which he saw as the final stage of his artistic efforts.

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<sup>466</sup> Conversation with the photographer, 30 November 2016.

<sup>467</sup> See Heuvel 2015.

<sup>468</sup> See for a monographical article on this photographic studio Veen 1998.

<sup>469</sup> Actually they worked in the topographic tradition of prints and drawings of city views and portrayed monuments, but also in that genre the explicit choice for the rural landscape was a rarity.



Fig. 4.11 Munnich & Ermerins, *Brouwerskolk (pond in the woods and dunes near Haarlem)*, 1860 technique unknown, ca. 10 x 14 cm, coll. Noord-Hollands Archives

In pictorialist photography, Dutch bucolic countryside was first depicted by photographers from abroad. Pictorialists tried to emulate painting with their photographic medium, by adopting its themes, compositions and styles. With sometimes complicated and special printing techniques, they attempted to approach the expressiveness and tactility of painting and printmaking with photography. The Scottish pictorialist photographer James Craig Annan (1864-1946) viewed Dutch landscape paintings of The Hague School in the *International Exhibition* in Glasgow in 1888.<sup>470</sup> He became interested in the flat and marshy character of the grey land, painted for example, by Anton Mauve. Seeing these paintings inspired Annan to travel through the Netherlands. He visited Amsterdam and Utrecht, but also smaller towns like Alkmaar, Haarlem and Zaandam, where he photographed the lives and activities of farmers and shepherds in the rural areas in between. The bucolic motive of the shepherd with his sheep flock in the countryside appears in his photo *A Utrecht Pastorale* of 1892. This pictorialist photograph by James Craig Annan was especially praised by British critics.<sup>471</sup> Although it is not known exactly which side of the town of Utrecht Annan took this picture, it is worth noting Utrecht's proximity to Laren. Annan's photograph could easily have been taken in countryside close to the place where Boske recently made *Mapping*. (Fig. 4.12)

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<sup>470</sup> Leijerzapf in Bool 2007, p. 120.

<sup>471</sup> Boom 2012, under 'Pictorialism in photography'.





Fig. 4.12 James Craig Annan, *A Utrecht Pastorale*, 1892, photogravure, 21.7 x 26.8 cm, coll Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, RP-F-2001-6.

The American art photographer Alfred Stieglitz (1864-1946) was also charmed by the Hague School of painting. During his European tour, he, too, travelled through the Dutch countryside. In 1897, he photographed twenty 'Dutch subjects'.<sup>472</sup> Just how persistently interesting the pastoral motive of the shepherd with his herd was to artists depicting the Dutch landscape, becomes clear when we read that Stieglitz was fascinated by '[...] the green fields, romantic windmills and shepherds with their flocks, which serve as inspiration for the grand pastoral pictures of Israëls and his followers.'<sup>473</sup> Stieglitz focused especially on the landscapes and lives of fishermen and their families, whom he photographed in the neighbourhoods in the small traditional towns of Katwijk and Noordwijk. Here, he found his bucolic theme in the dunes along the coast of the North Sea. (Fig. 4.13)

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<sup>472</sup> Boom 2012, under the heading 'Pictorialism in photography'.

<sup>473</sup> S. Greenough 2002, Alfred Stieglitz. The Key Set. The Alfred Stieglitz Collection of Photographs, Vol. I 1886-1922, Washington/New York. Here quoted from Boom 2012, under the heading 'Pictorialism in photography'.



Fig. 4.13 Alfred Stieglitz, *Mending Nets (Die Netzflickerin)*, Katwijk 1894, ca.1894-ca.1898 photogravure, 26,0 x 24,8 cm, coll. Rijksmuseum Amsterdam, inv. no. BI-F-B0447-2-1-5.

Thus, we have seen how the bucolic motive, originating in antiquity, emerged in Renaissance and nineteenth-century painting and foreign pictorialist photography, before it evolved further in the pictorialist photography of the Netherlands by Dutch photographers. In contrast to nineteenth-century pictorialist photographers from abroad, Dutch art photographers - apart from the above-mentioned Munnich & Ermerins - were inspired by landscape painting of The Hague School only after 1900.<sup>474</sup> Again, Haarlem, the cradle of Dutch visual landscape art played a key role.

The artistic motive of the bucolic landscape was introduced into photography via the Hague School of painting by photographers from the Netherlands Club for Photographic Art (*Nederlandse Club voor FotoKunst*, NCvFK). This club, NCvFK, was initiated in 1907 in Amsterdam, and was inspired by the example of the American 'Photo-Secession', founded by Alfred Stieglitz, amongst others, as well as by the British 'Brotherhood of the Linked Ring', initiated by photographer Henry Peach Robinson.<sup>475</sup> The members of these groups strove to emulate paintings and for the recognition of photography as an art form. In these circles, landscape became a genre for the artistic branch of photography. Internationally, Dutch paintings by, for example, Rembrandt were praised for their chiaroscuro and clear compositions.<sup>476</sup> For Dutch pictorialists, Dutch landscape was a logical genre to work in. There was an abundance of inspiring examples, both as paintings in various museums as well as in the original shape of the physical landscape.

Seeing pictorialist landscape as an early twentieth-century precursor to Boske's landscapes, it is relevant to note how landscape entered Dutch photography via painting. The Dutch pictorialist production of landscape photography emerged from around 1910 onwards. Although the movement was already fading by then, the Hague School of landscape painting was *the* source of inspiration for

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<sup>474</sup> Heuvel 2015.

<sup>475</sup> See Harker 1979.

<sup>476</sup> See for a reconstruction of these Dutch sources of inspiration to international pictorialism, Heuvel 2010.

Dutch landscape photography. Dutch photographer Berend Zweers, for example, made landscape photographs in the heath of the dunes near Haarlem - the exact place where Ruisdael had been working centuries before. (Fig. 4.14)



Fig. 4.14 Berend Zweers, untitled [heath in the dunes near Haarlem], s.d. [first decade of twentieth century] carbon print, 19,5 x 29,9 cm, coll. Leiden University Library, inv. no. PK-F-G.502

Adriaan Boer, a pivotal pictorialist in the Netherlands and founding father of the Secession movement and the Dutch photography magazines *De Camera* (1908-1927) and *Focus* (1914-still ongoing), besides being a professional portraitist, pointed his camera frequently at the Dutch countryside for his 'autonomous' work. Landscapes were a common theme for him, as was the life of farmers and the interiors of farmers' houses. In one of his landscape photographs featuring a flock of sheep, the direct influence of the bucolic motive, so popular with the Hague School, is clearly visible. (Fig. 4.15) A motive shared by Zweers, Boer and Boske.



Fig. 4.15 Adriaan Boer, *Towards the fold* [heath near Amersfoort or Hilversum], 1905 coll. National Archives, The Hague, inv. no. Boer 058.

There is a direct connection between this picture and Boske's photograph insofar as they are both

painterly visions of heath landscape in the middle of the Netherlands. The information from the National Archives regarding the location of Boer's scene is ambiguous, given as either being near to Amersfoort or near to Hilversum. If it is indeed the latter, it would be very close (within 6 km) to the area where Boske's *Mapping* was made.<sup>477</sup> On the other hand, if Amersfoort, some 17km away from Boske's place, is in fact the location, it is worth noting that the landscape is of the same type as that in Kim Boske's *Mapping* and indirectly linked to it geographically and geologically.

Visually, the photographs by Boer and Boske are connected to each other through the composition, which, in both cases is firmly determined by the dark tree, its branches and its leaves that dominate the horizontal and light-coloured countryside. Furthermore, the two pictures share the faintly rolling surface of the heath and the light-coloured sand in between the vegetation, which, as we have seen in the first step of our georeferencing, is typical for the ground in the area. And, both pictures have a poetic style featuring blurred contours. In the case of the century-old photograph by Adriaan Boer, this results from the pictorialist photographic printing technique.

Boer made this photograph using the bromoil technique. This involves transferring the image to the photographic paper through light sensitivity, although the resulting picture does not appear straight away in black and white. The light sensitivity process results in different degrees of water impregnation. The artist subsequently stipples the surface with a brush and oil paint (hence the term 'bromoil'), causing the exposed, dry parts to become dark and the un- or underexposed, wet parts remain light.<sup>478</sup> It was a favourite process of the pictorialists because the use of the brush made their art feel closer to the profession of painters. Thus, the shepherd and his flock in the heath fields and the bromoil technique with its brushed, painting-like appearance, ties the Adriaan Boer photograph to the bucolic motive of historic landscape painting. The absence of a geographical location in the title or caption of the photograph and the almost poetic title *Towards the Fold*, underline the generic character of the photograph.

*Mapping 5* by Kim Boske shares the blurriness, painterly appearance and generic character of Boer's photograph *Towards the Fold*. However, in contrast to Boer's process, the blurred effect in Boske's photography is not caused by a painterly technique that mechanically blurs the contours of singular pictures. Indeed, a closer look at Boske's photoworks leaves us puzzled by how this effect is achieved. What, then, is actually at stake here? We see different versions of the branches of the trees, of the bushes and woods and paths on the horizon, apparently semi-transparent and overlapping each other. Did the camera move during a long shutter time? Or did the tree perhaps move in the wind while it was exposed to the light-sensitive film, like the blurred trees in nineteenth-century photography? This blurring through movement was also applied deliberately to research its visual impact. Indeed, the Dutch painter George Hendrik Breitner was famous for this technique. (Fig. 4.17) He studied the effect and processed it in his paintings, resulting in the blurriness that is typical of impressionism.

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<sup>477</sup> The indicated area would be south of the Dutch town Hilversum, while the place of Kim Boske's photograph is north of Hilversum, towards Laren.

<sup>478</sup> Explanation of this photographic technique in Dijk 2011, p. 189.



Fig. 4.17 George H. Breitner, without title [street scene, center of Amsterdam], ca. 1890's, gelatin silver print 7,9 x 10,2 cm, coll. Leiden University Libraries, PK-F-MM.388

Another reason for applying blurriness in photography is to get away from specificity in photography. The unsharpening of contours and fading of details results in a more generic picture.<sup>479</sup> Blurriness makes the photograph less transparent, thus shifting the viewer's attention away from the represented objects to the surface. According to them, this diminishes the indexical quality of the photograph, but increases its iconic character.<sup>480</sup> Like the mechanical processes of the pictorialists, this intervention results in a photographic picture that approaches painting. The elimination of sharpness and detail brings the viewer closer to a mental picture, the details of which are filled in by our brains and memories – much like *sfumato* in painting. Among the artists who apply this effect in their photography are Heidi Specker, or, as mentioned by Van Gelder and Westgeest, Uta Barth and Thomas Ruff. A Dutch photographer who works with blurriness to obtain more generic images, is the Rotterdam-based artist Frank van der Salm.<sup>481</sup>

In order to understand Boske's blurred intervention, a comparison to Van der Salm's

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<sup>479</sup> See Caroline von Courten's unpublished MA-thesis *Teasing Absence: Out of Focus in Contemporary Photography* (Leiden University, 2010), here quoted from Gelder/Westgeest 2011, pp. 59-63.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>481</sup> See his monographical exhibition and catalogue *Multiplicity / Frank van der Salm* (2008) in the Friesch Museum in Leeuwarden.

monumental photographs is apt. He, too, searches for the generic pictures in his landscape and urban photography. He is interested in the cultural aspect of and the human impact on landscape and urban environment and makes his photographs all over the globe. The specific geographical location is not as important as the urban or infrastructural phenomena that he researches. Thus, his photographic works consist of blurred photographs in which only the general contours and lines are visible. They bear generic titles such as *Square*, *Screen*, *Domicile* or *Network*, without mentioning the exact place or even country or continent where they were taken. (Fig. 4.18) But is this intervention comparable to what Kim Boske does in *Mapping*? Almost.



Fig. 4.18 Frank van der Salm, *Domicile*, 2002  
chromogenic print on dibond, 103 x 150 cm, coll. the artist

In the case of Kim Boske, there is also blurring, although not as a result of movement, as in nineteenth-century photography. There are also no special printing techniques used like those of pictorialists. And her work is not intentionally out of focus like that of Van der Salm. Rather, the photograph by Kim Boske of a tree becomes more painterly because she digitally layers semi-transparent photographs of the same tree that have, however, been photographed from different viewpoints, and then overlapped. This brings us to the photographic intervention that Boske executes in *Mapping* as well as in some other series. She tries to reach a more mental, generic picture of landscapes by overlaying and showing comparable photographs simultaneously.

In her studio, Boske digitally merges these photographs, which are taken from different aspects, into one picture in which the various exposures have digitally been overlaid. This is not an all-encompassing, scientific method; rather, the method is the point of departure for the photographer. Ultimately, it is the eye of the artist Boske, who judges the picture for aesthetic reasons. She makes corrections with an eye on creating the perfect composition.<sup>482</sup> More than a scientific method, the process used by Boske to achieve her pictures can be typified as a semi-scientific artistic intervention.

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<sup>482</sup> Explanation by the photographer in a conversation on 30 November 2016.

The photographic intervention of overlaying images to create a more generic picture is comparable to an academic photographic practice that emerged in the nineteenth century: a controversial method from physical anthropology, elaborately explored by Francis Galton (1822-1911). This British statistician, anthropologist, discoverer, psychologist and founding father of modern eugenics, combined photographic portraits of types of people, to presumably discover collectively shared traits. (Fig. 4.19) As Kim Boske does today, Galton finished the layered photographs himself, using his own imagination. He called these composite photographs 'pictorial statistics', which, in his opinion, were close to 'abstract ideas', which he also called 'cumulative ideas'.<sup>483</sup> This approach and formulation seems applicable in the case of Boske's *Mapping* photographs.

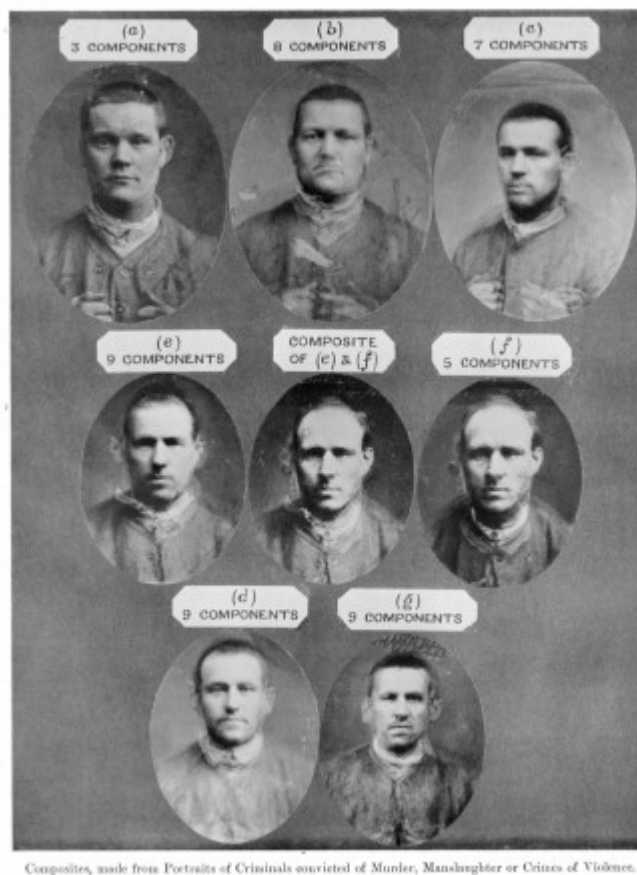


Fig. 4.19 Francis Galton, composite picture of nine layered photographs of murderers. Collection University College, London.

Galton's photographic process was one of the academic methods popular around 1900 and employed to understand the world by means of formulating typologies. Galton tried to define all kinds of types of people: he combined, for example, photographs of family members to get to shared family traits. More controversial were the composite photographs he made of people with diseases and criminals with

<sup>483</sup> See for a discussion of Galton's method the first chapter entitled 'The Type and the Gaze. Racial Photography as Scientific Evidence, 1876-1918', in: Morris-Reich, pp. 44-49.

categories such as 'murderers', but also 'convicted for larceny (without violence)'.<sup>484</sup> The method implied a stigmatisation of people of certain races or with certain physical traits, which today is intolerable. But, getting back to the photographs of trees of Kim Boske, can we argue that this twenty-first-century photographer is seeking types of trees? Although the method is similar, Boske's images are not composed of pictures of *different* trees, but always of the same tree. Moreover, her photographs are not accompanied by scientific natural-historical information on the species of trees or trees in general. Although the layered photographs lead to a more generic picture, I can conclude that the making of typologies does not seem to be a key issue in Boske's photographs.

The work of Boske can better be compared to art with a comparable photographic intervention - the compository photographic work of British artist Idris Khan (b. 1978). Idris Khan became well-known for the intervention he undertook on the famous photography of Bernd and Hilla Becher of types of industrial architecture, which I previously mentioned in the context of the photography of vernacular architecture, as shown in the exhibition *New Topographics* in the George Eastman House in 1975.<sup>485</sup> (fig. 4.20).



Fig. 4.20 Idris Khan, *Every.. Bernd and Hilla Becher Gable Sided Houses*, 2004, photographic print, 208 x 160 cm, courtesy Saatchi Gallery, London

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<sup>484</sup> See for a critique on the stereotyping effect of this photographic practice for example Allan Sekula in his article 'The Body and the Archive'. Sekula 1986.

<sup>485</sup> See my more elaborate discussion of the *New Topographics* exhibition in relation to Theo Baart's documentary approach in paragraph 2.3 of this dissertation.



As an artistic intervention, this is a visual study designed to achieve generic pictures, like those by Frank van der Salm and Francis Galton. Khan even expands his work to generic images of painting. He also applies his method to, for example, the self-portraits of the Dutch painter Rembrandt, bringing it close to the method used by Galton in seeking family traits. (fig. 4.21)



Fig. 4.21 Idris Khan, Rembrandt, by himself, 2006, composite photograph of reproductions of Rembrandt's self portraits, digital chromogenic print, 39.7 x 29.8 cm, whereabouts unknown, seen on artnet.com art auction website (<http://www.artnet.com/artists/idris-khan/rembrandtby-himself-XZOWAZddmxlfJkPstQXUQg2>, accessed on 20 February 2017.)

In common with Galton and Khan, Kim Boske uses simultaneous depiction as an artistic intervention. The difference, of course, is that Boske does not combine photographs of *different* places or subjects. She combines pictures of the *same* place and subject (a tree each time) but taken from different sides and combines these simultaneously into one picture. According to the artist, this also stems from her childhood memories.<sup>486</sup> As a child, she was intrigued by the fact that one can only see one side of the tree at a time, which made her run around the tree in a circle, in order to see it all. As an adult artist, her photographic approach imitates this childish circling around the tree to get the more 'real' and thus more 'total' picture. This calls to mind the words of Schwartz and Ryan, who, quoting Lowenthal, state that 'the lineaments of the world we live in are both seen and shaped in accordance or by contrast, with images we hold of other worlds - better worlds, past worlds, future worlds. We constantly compare the reality with the fancy.' Kim Boske ties the photograph of the place in the Zuiderheide to a different, multifaceted and therefore more complete picture of the same place. Each photograph of *Mapping* is a cumulation of registrations of Boske's walking around and looking at one tree from different sides. This

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<sup>486</sup> Conversation with the photographer on 30 November 2016.

can be seen as a congelation of the experience of simultaneousness. To speak in terms of Creswell, we can see this as Boske's landscaping, place making intervention.<sup>487</sup>

This notion of simultaneity, which Boske uses to turn the tree and place into a more complete version of the same place is clearly preceded by a certain episode of art history. Cubism in the years 1911-1913 was similarly concerned with the incapability of man to see different sides of a thing or person at the same time and the phenomenon of simultaneity. Pablo Picasso for instance, concerned himself with simultaneity as a spatial process, i.e. simultaneously representing different sides of an object that cannot usually be seen in one go.<sup>488</sup> Hito Steyerl, who provided a theoretical framework for the vertical downward perspective of De Ruijter's *Baumschule #2* in the former chapter, is relevant here as well regarding the simultaneity of perspectives in Boske's photowork.<sup>489</sup> Steyerl interprets the simultaneity of different perspectives, which is the case in the fragments of photomontage and Cubist artworks as a dismantling and demolishing of the traditional linear perspective. Although Steyerl's seeing of this disorienting dissolving of the traditional perspective paralleled in developments in science and Warcraft is not shared by Boske to the same extent, certainly the simultaneity of the overlaying perspectives in the *Mapping* pictures works alienating on viewers, who are not sure anymore whether they are looking at a photograph or at a fictive painting or animation of some kind.<sup>490</sup>

The artistic intervention of simultaneity came to be called the 'fourth dimension in painting'. Although simultaneity in futurism focuses on the depiction of movement more than many-sidedness, some words of the key futurist Italian painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni are particularly applicable to what Kim Boske is doing. Boccioni stressed that cubism or futurism does not aim at the depiction of an optical or illusionist impression, but of a psychological and total experience.<sup>491</sup> This is exactly what Kim Boske is striving for.<sup>492</sup>

If I consider the simultaneity in Boske's photograph as a congelation of a movement, I must also consider the movement itself. As the artist explained, it is the act of walking around the tree, which she remembered doing as a child. This moving in a circle around the tree and looking inward to the centre of that circle means, equals? looking with an inverted, inwardly directed panorama. Whereas the process of looking around and outward in the case of a panorama, which was discussed by Burgin in 'The Time of the Panorama' and which was the case in Baart's *Werklust*, is directed outwardly or centrifugal, the way of looking inward towards a centre, which is at stake in the case of Boske's *Mapping 5*, can be seen as centripetal.<sup>493</sup> Whereas in the case of the centrifugal panorama the view is expanded and

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<sup>487</sup> I refer to the place-making activity or intervention by humans in their physical environment as described by Tim Creswell in Creswell 2004.

<sup>488</sup> See Apollinaire e.a. 2010, esp. pp. 41-46 'Simultaneity in Cubist Circles' and pp. 110-121 'Synthetic Cubism'.

<sup>489</sup> Steyerl 2011, p. 6.

<sup>490</sup> The alienation and analogy to painting, caused by simultaneity in Boske's work is often referred to in critiques on her work and interviews with the artist, such as the interview of Marc Valli with Boske which appeared in *Elephant Magazine #8 (2011)* and the editorial interview with Boske in the October 2012 issue of *October+ Magazine*; here quoted from the website of Kim Boske, <http://www.kimboske.com/Texts>, accessed on 21 January 2018.

<sup>491</sup> See on this aspect of Boccioni's work Thomas 2013, p. 41-42.

<sup>492</sup> Conversation with the photographer on 30 November 2016.

<sup>493</sup> Burgin 2009 [2005]; it was Bazin who discerned these different kinds of directedness in looking, as pointed out in the cases of Baart and De Ruijter in the former chapters as well. Bazin 2005 [1971], p. 55.

widened over an area, in the case of the centripetal the view is taken from the environment and concentrated on that very one spot. For the beholder, this walking around also brings another association to the fore: the ritual circumambulation that is known from many religions, for example the walking around a holy shrine in Roman Catholicism. The compiled picture of a tree being circumambulated renders the photograph with ritual value, thus giving it a special value. Thus, the photographs of Kim Boske contribute to the value of the tree as a point of interest. This is the effect Tuan talked of when speaking about making a stop at a point to render it more valuable.

Moreover, an effect of Boske's interference is that it gives the scene a striking resemblance to paintings of Dutch landscapes. Several aspects enforce this resemblance. Her intervention of overlaying pictures and showing them simultaneously using transparency, makes the images blurred. This convincingly connects the 'real' landscape to the painted landscape. Blurring the picture to make it look more painterly has - as pointed out before - been done previously by pictorialists. However, the pictorialists worked in much smaller sizes, which prevented the spectator from making a direct association between the photograph and a tableau-like painting. Also, pictorialists worked mainly in black and white. The more direct connection between Boske's landscapes with the landscape paintings of The Hague or Laren Schools lies in the qualities of today's colour photography. The representation in these photographs of reality represents colours as they really are. Also, the exhibition prints of the photographs are much bigger, approaching the size of paintings. This makes the experience of the final, monumental photograph by Kim Boske close to the experience of a more traditional landscape painting.

Concluding this third step of geogeneric comparison of Boske's landscape in *Mapping 5* with other landscapes of the same type, and the analysis of her photographic intervention, I can say that her photograph *Mapping 5* is - to speak in terms of Maria Pelizzari - an act of confirmation: like the touristic photographers Pelizzari writes about, Boske stays close to what tourist information indicates as sites of interest.<sup>494</sup> The picture confirms the cultural-historical value that was rendered to this place by the landscapes of the Laren School of painting, whose artists used the same area as a subject for their work as Boske has in her photo series *Mapping*. The bucolic motive of the joy of rambling in heath fields, the simple life of the shepherd, wandering around with his sheep flock, resonates in Boske's picture. This is an ancient motive that has reached us today via the taste of Renaissance Italian collectors, theoreticians and artists, and from the Barbizon and the Hague school of painters up to the heath in 't Gooi, where painters from the Hague School like Anton Mauve discovered the area near Laren as a beautiful place to live and work. The association with the bucolic is enforced by the fact that the choice for this area by the artist Boske was made on the basis of strolls by the artist with her parents when she was a child: the Zuiderheide near Laren was made into a nature reserve for recreation purposes by the Goois Natuurreservaat heritage organisation, while the memory of the bucolic life of the shepherd is kept alive through the flock of sheep that is herded there and visited by tourists today.

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<sup>494</sup> See Maria Pelizzari, chapter 2, 'Retracing the Outlines of Rome: Intertextuality and Imaginative Geographies in Nineteenth-Century Photographs', in Schwartz and Ryan 2003, pp. 62-63. The touristic information in the context of Boske's work is the visitor's information of the nature reserve 'Goois Natuurreservaat', see [www.gnr.nl](http://www.gnr.nl).

Returning to Wells's theory on place making, it is noteworthy that Kim Boske is not critically challenging conventional geographical imagination. Rather, she confirms and explores a more generic picture of the beautiful heath area by visually connecting to the pictorial tradition of the Laren School of painting. This painterly quality to her work is realised in several ways. Through her camera position and direction and through her framing, and treatment of light, colour and tableau-like size of the art work, her photograph is visually analogous to paintings by the Laren School of painting of the same area, like the *Heath near Laren* made by Anton Mauve, in the collection of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam (fig. 59). The appropriation of painting is further achieved through her technique of simultaneously layering and showing different versions of the same tree.

In conclusion, while in the cases by Baart and De Ruijter the landscape photography put a new or alternative picture in direct opposition with the conventional geographical imagination of the place, Boske's image is surprisingly confirmative of the rich, collective visual memory of the place she photographed. Her pictures of the heath fields of the Zuiderheide in 't Gooi, in the centre of the Netherlands, show many analogies to the paintings of the Laren school of painting of the late nineteenth century – although Boske herself was not aware of this visual collective memory. In part, these analogies are the result of the geological conditions of the place, as revealed by the georeferencing research. The typical broken white, ocre and brown colours of the sand and the heath vegetation characterise both the historical paintings as well as Boske's photographs. Moreover, as I further concluded in the georeferencing, the ancient use of the land and way of life – small-scale farming and cattling – is deliberately kept alive as a 'way of life' accompanying the heath landscape, because the physical landscape has become heritage and the human activity kept unaltered for touristic purposes. The photographic process executed by Boske results in her photographs connecting to the formal and aesthetic conventions of the place. Although it resembles Cubism, which was also preoccupied with simultaneously showing more sides of one object, Boske's layered presentation of several photographs of the same tree from different sides results in an image whose blurriness is reminiscent of brushstrokes and makes the photograph look surprisingly painterly. The true use of colour and the tableau-like size and mounting in a frame further connect Boske's photograph to historical painting of the heath area. Because the photograph shows not only characteristics of the physical landscape, but connects strongly to the collective visual memory and geographical imagination of the place, these images of the shepherds' landscape, which is cherished for leisure purposes, evokes memories of farmers' lives and ancient bucolic motives. In this way, *Mapping 5* generates a sense of place, or 'makes place' of the Zuiderheide.