



## **Mutatis mutandis**

### **With those things having been changed which need to be changed**

Through playing, the Homo Ludens, the man who plays, develops his skills. Through playing, he discovers himself and the nature of those with whom he plays. With 'Mutatis mutandis', Jan von Holleben exposes the first cycle of his greater project: 'Homo Ludens – The Art of Playing Photography'.

From original photographs and in collaboration with the artist Sergei Sviatchenko, chimaeras emerge through collages of humans and animals. This idea may instil fear, for it seems that nature's order has been disturbed. One may imagine beings trapped in an unnatural body, deprived of their soul, living an unworthy and dark life.

In fact, 'Chimaira', the antic eponym, was a fire-breathing monster with three heads. Her siblings were Zerberus, the hellhound, and Hydra, the cruel giant serpent. These were fearsome creatures; the opposite of da Vinci's well-structured human being that served as a measure for all creation and the correspondent to noble innocence and the quiet greatness of the human soul.

*But what if everything is suddenly turned upside down?*

What if those hybrid beings are not sad creatures, but instead intelligent, happy and confident earthlings? A species that is full of joy, which gives the noble innocence a playful twist and happily juggles necessities, role models, rules and archetypes?

The images quickly demonstrate that this is actually possible. The photographer and the artist, themselves Homo Ludens, are on a journey of discovery, joined by the individuals depicted in his works. These participants are thrust into a wonderful game in which every wish literally grows wings or arms or legs or humps or hair. Mountains are crested and valleys crossed with colossal steps. One dances on ropes, floats above cities, dives through caves and sunbathes on beaches.

*"Mutatis mutandis - With those things having been changed which need to be changed"*, discusses a positive vision of diversity and change. The changeableness of each actor is his strength. The Homo Ludens reinvents himself everyday. His eyes are wide open, yet he is not blue-eyed; he constructs at will, but not arbitrarily; he is spirited, but is neither a spirit nor any other mutant. What he changes are attributes and what he preserves is identity.

In this train of thought, this body of work is a pleading for the serendipity of one's internal possibilities and the great faith in one's own skills. The chimera can be a monster, a magic creature, an imagined mind game, or even a fantasy filled with life.

The metamorphosis of the butterfly is evidence of how a magical creature grows from a monstrous being. Jan's and Sergei's images prove that play and fantasy can create a better reality.

We can be impatient and excited to see what happens next with the art of playing photography.

Marc Piesbergen 03/009











Credit: Jan von Holleben w/ Sergei Sviatchenko  
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