

## ABOUT

The exhibition ONWARD&UPWARD - Art in the Garden of Life draws inspiration from our uncertain present, where a COVID-19 pandemic, and its varied implications, continue to unfold worldwide. However, looking beyond the particular anxieties of our current crises, the exhibition questions whether there has ever been a time of genuine security and stability?

ONWARD&UPWARD reflects on the many uncertainties and pitfalls of life itself, and on our enduring will to continue in the face of these challenges; a resilience that carries us 'onward' and 'upward' using every means at our disposal.

The direct reason for the exhibition ONWARD&UPWARD is the uncertain present in which the COVID-19 pandemic brought us. However, have there ever been times full of certainty and security? The concept behind the exhibition therefore looks beyond the insecurity of the current crisis.

ONWARD&UPWARD reflects on the uncertainties and pitfalls of life itself and on man's strength to continue; we must carry on moving 'onward' and 'upward' using all the means at our disposal.

'Il faut cultiver notre jardin', Voltaire wrote at the end of his novel Candide. In other words: let's do what is in our power to bring change and improvement to the world by starting close to ourselves. In line with this, you could say that, in order to grow 'onward' and 'upward', we need art that brings us close to ourselves.

The scenography of the exhibition, designed by Liselore Frowijn, is based on the concept of a surreal garden. The garden is a visual feast, but in need of constant care. Roses have thorns, plants can be poisonous, fungi, weeds and dead leaves keep popping up. Even though a garden puts us to work, it is a place that moves, comforts, gives joy...and tranquillity.

The art shown in this scenography is close to our skin. It is art that embraces and comforts us, moves us, inspires us and stimulates us. But also, art that scrapes, stings and offers unexpected points of view.

There is solace, there are dreams and tears. Relationships are torn and healed. There is vulnerability and strength. There is spirituality. We stand face to face with bizarre creatures but they are more disarming than threatening. We see snapshots of people in everyday situations. We dream away in an overwhelming tree landscape while decay is lurking. We look at sleeping men who imagine themselves protected in each other's arms and we see identical twin sisters who find support together in the complex circumstances in which they grow up.

The artists in this exhibition bring us close to our emotions. Hopefully they inspire us to go 'onward' and 'upward' in a world full of uncertainty.

The exhibition is curated by Renny Ramakers and Liselore Frowijn. Especially for this occasion poet Ramsey Nasr has compiled a collection of poems for uncertain times: The Long Present (in Dutch).