

Rewilding the Art Book

By Jennifer Vignone

Paul Veron's latest book of photographs, "Rewilding the Human Spirit" causes one to think about what photography is and what role the art book has in this day and age. Technology makes it so easy to instantly take and share pictures all over the world — we are all photographers now. Applications such as Instagram, Facebook, and the like, allow the posting of almost every moment of our lives.

In this fragmented collection of visuals populating the internet, one of the admirable things about Paul Veron's online book, "Rewilding the Human Spirit" is the exploration of a theme. This book is an immersion in the nude poised in nature, standing out against the landscape or melding with the elements. He opens the book with an essay where he recounts several experiences that inspired him to his own "rewilding" and the creation of this volume. As Mr. Veron explains in Chapter Three of his accompanying text:

"...rewilding is all about the experience of connecting deeply and intuitively to, and belonging in, this world and its many varied landscapes and environments. It is also about being very comfortable and at home with nature, taking some form of spiritual and/or mental nurturing from such contact".

His text indicates his searching to reconnect. He recounts instances of social gaffs and moments of realization in how his life and exposure to the elements has been very different from many, and how this has affected his knowledge and his appreciation of others' experiences. Ultimately this becomes a visual experience with photographs, that through their creation, engage the viewer in the rewilding experience.

The photographs depict the splendor of the landscape. They are lush, powerful, and inviting. Displayed on a computer, the back lighting of the screen provides a glow the printed page does not. And yet, the interest in seeing this collection as a book, and a story, is there to offer another layer of appreciation.

Veron states that "nudity is important in the work for its purity and for its equalization of all of us". While the nudes photographed provoke thought of the classical nude, the reality of today's nude juxtaposes how times have changed. The imperfect, Rubenesque body is now sculpted and toned, with shaved pubic hair and nipple rings. The body is not as "natural" anymore. There is a tendency to look and think..."she's had work done" as per today's society and obsession with the self and its perfection — the desire to hold onto a youthful visage. The goal of rewilding, then, may be to leave behind the trappings of today's quest for perfection and get reacquainted with the reality of what the human body is...something just as lush and at the same time, as tenuous a part of nature.

Some images are particularly effective in their exploration of the rewilding of man.



Leaf in Tree, May 2017, mid-Wales

In "Leaf in Tree", the figure lies across tree trunks, branches, moss, grass, and earth. The pose is reminiscent of Courbet's "The Origin of the World" (1866) and "Sleeping Nude" (1858). However, nipple rings and shaved pubic hair create a different awareness in how we view the nude and ourselves. Wilding is one thing; untidiness another. The image invites consideration of how we view nudity, image, ourselves, and what and how we want our naked selves presented to the world, even when "wilding" in nature.



Bare Landscape, December 2018, Fuerteventura

In "Bare Landscape", the figure sits within a landscape of like tones, shapes and colors. The figure's back faces the viewer, curled toward the vast landscape before her. We feel pulled into the moment, integrating with nature and a sense of oneness.



Waterfall Nudes, July 2018, Snaefellsness Peninsula-Western Iceland

In “Waterfall Nudes”, two female figures curve into themselves like rocks or snails, resting within a lush landscape of greens and the rush of waterfalls. Like the rocks and leaves and elements surrounding them, they find their home and protection within nature.



Volcanic Ball, July 2018, northern Snaefellsness Peninsula, Iceland

“Volcanic Ball” continues this idea with the figure mimicking the shape of the remaining half of a volcanic ball. The female figure hugs the earth in the same manner that the hardened volcanic mass grips to its place in nature. The smallness of her form against its backdrop pays tribute to the vastness of the environment — the human bows seeking unity and forgiveness from the world that supports its life.



Leaf at the Brook, May 2018

“Leaf at the Brook” uses natural and manmade elements to integrate the figure into nature in the way man integrates necessities into a landscape to be able to navigate it. Here, the bridge is used to anchor the model. There is something impressionistic in the feeling of this photograph. The model’s body itself has the coloring and shape of a Manet, with the landscape bearing the feeling of a French garden or river, the glistening water shimmering tribute to the waters of a Monet. We are at peace with the model who drapes herself against the rock. The viewer can feel the sense of the stones against her back and the sounds of the water and of nature around her.

Paul Veron’s book begins a dialog with the viewer. He employs female models ranging from ages 24 to 43 to explore rewilding man in nature, bringing us back to a core existence. He mentions that he would like to take this further, with the next volume connecting men with the natural environment. It would be equally interesting to see into the next age group of 40-60 perhaps, or in a black and white, breaking the images down more into pure form and shape, the way the aging body begins to break down as it re-enters nature as the “remember man that you are dust” state.

Technology allows us a unique experience and means of communication. Many people no longer invest in a tangible book. While “Rewilding the Human Spirit” is effective online, it invites the handheld experience, as the theme of the book speaks to the feel of being within nature. Turning pages and lingering over printed images creates intimacy. Paul Veron makes this possible by having the book available in a limited printing in large format for those who wish to indulge. It seems a natural part of the rewilding experience — the physicality of the book within human hands.

The digital version of Paul Veron's "Rewilding the Human Spirit" is available to buy at Blurb in both the USA and UK at the following links:

<https://www.blurb.com/b/9600196-rewilding-the-human-spirit>

<https://www.blurb.co.uk/b/9600196-rewilding-the-human-spirit>

A deluxe coffee table large landscape printed version of the book is for sale at Amazon. It is produced on demand by Blurb through this link:

[https://www.amazon.com/Rewilding-Human-Spirit-Amazilia-](https://www.amazon.com/Rewilding-Human-Spirit-Amazilia-Photography/dp/0464446783/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=rewilding+the+human+spirit&qid=1578569934&sr=8-1)

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