



Transcripts of a Sea

Stephan Vanfleteren

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- A unique opportunity to witness photographer Stephan Vanfleteren's latest work inspired by the sea
- This book is published in conjunction with an exhibition of the same name at the Royal Museum of Fine Arts (MSK) in Ghent, from 20 September 2025, to 04 January 2026

'The sea never makes a fuss. You don't have to explain yourself or be polite. What does she care what you think of her or what you make of her. When you come or where you enter her. I capture, interpret, sublimate, abstract. I show everything, I show nothing.'

— Stephan Vanfleteren

In **Transcripts of a Sea**, the internationally renowned photographer Stephan Vanfleteren (b. 1969) shares the enchantment that has driven him to the sea over the past five years. He analyses the sea, in all her various shapes and ever-changing light, with an obsession bordering on the dangerous, and with a fluid longing. Stormy, mirror-like, misty, thunderous, the surface deceptively calm or like a wildly-thumping washing-machine drum: the photographer does not observe it from the beach or from a boat but opts for a wet confrontation by literally immersing himself in the sea.

136 extraordinary images with texts by Stephan Vanfleteren, Johan De Smet and Manfred Sellink.

Stephan Vanfleteren (°1969) is one of Belgium's most renowned photographers. Among the general public, he is mainly celebrated for his penetrating black and white portraits of famous and anonymous people. However, his oeuvre is much more diverse than that. Starting his career as a press photographer, Vanfleteren made captivating photo reports about the events that dominated the news. Later on, he began to elaborate a variation of themes in extended photo reportages, going from storefront façades to a journey along the mythical Atlantic Wall. For his most recent work, Vanfleteren withdrew into his studio to focus on his own version of classic themes such as nude portraits and still life photography. Whether it concerns his journalistic, documentary or artistic photographic projects, Vanfleteren always remains true to his characteristic style and aesthetic. His expansive personal stories and reflections of encounters are mesmerizing excursions of a photographer who feels as much a witness as an accomplice. A melancholic soul hides in the sensitive photographer. In August 2021 Stephan Vanfleteren received a Doctor Honoris Causa from the VUB - Brussels University, Belgium.

