



Authenticity – and its paradoxes – are always in question in Elsa & Johanna's playful series, **MOORMERLAND**. Their domestic vignettes and deserted landscapes evoke the uncanny reality of a model movie set, one in which self-expression and conformity become helplessly intertwined.



Un jour ordinaire / An Ordinary Day

In their filmic images, French photographers Elsa Parra and Johanna Benainous – who work together under the name Elsa & Johanna – act in front of the lens as a diverse cast of archetypal alter-egos. Props, wigs and all manner of disguises are deployed to create images whose warm emotional glow comes through despite their campy artifice. For their latest surrealism-inspired self-portrait series, *The Timeless Story of MOORMERLAND*, on show at Städtische Galerie, Karlsruhe, Germany (18 November 2021–13 March 2022), the pair travelled across 15 regions of northern Germany, embodying a cast of characters whose striking distinction elevates their dull, domestic surroundings into the realm of our collective imaginary. The duo's photographs exist somewhere between the playful act of posing for a holiday snap and the overt performance of character acting, and ultimately confuse the two. We encounter the paradox of mass authenticity, where our longing to be ourselves is expressed through becoming just like everyone else. ●



Myrtille / Blueberry



Le miroir d'en face / The Mirror Across the Street



Le croisement / Crossroads



Quelque part à Moormerland / Somewhere in Moormerland



Above, *La fièvre des fleurs / Flower Fever*
Opposite, *Le veilleur de nuit / The Night Watcher*



Le calme avant la tempête / Calm Before the Storm



Les enfants reviennent / The Kids Return



Le son du clocher / The Sound of the Bell Tower