

The Believers

by Geert van Kesteren



The Believers is the latest work by Dutch documentary photographer and filmmaker Geert van Kesteren (*The Netherlands*, 1966). Projected on 27 video-screens in the dome prison in Breda, The Netherlands, Van Kesteren shows religious ceremonies in Israel/Palestine next to secular ones. What are the believers looking for?

Based in the Holy Land, the bedrock of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Van Kesteren delves into the human agenda of faith. He examines how seek unity, belonging, and acceptance in both ancient and modern manifestations. Believers from all over the world come to the Holy Land to participate in centuries-old ceremonies and traditions, in which their faith almost becomes tangible. It all seems light years away from the perception of the atheist Westerner. But are they really that different?

‘Try to see God as the first virtual reality that man has ever created’, says Van Kesteren. ‘Isn’t our current belief in data and algorithms just as religious?’ Recording your experiences, uploading and sharing it with others seems to be a new life goal to many, becoming part of the worldwide data-flow a new way to give meaning. Today we no longer

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turn to God for answers to difficult questions, but to an algorithm, a new omniscient entity.

In addition to the installation, Geert van Kesteren will release his new book *The Believers* (design: Mevis & Van Deursen) on September 5th, 2018. In contrast to the monumental video-installation, which seems to resemble a self-thinking supercomputer, the book has the size of the smartphones which we all use to record and share everything we experience.



Geert van Kesteren worked for years as a photojournalist for Newsweek and Stern, and published the acclaimed photobooks *Why Mister, Why?* and *Baghdad Calling* about the Iraq war. His work was awarded national and international prizes, and has been exhibited in numerous solo-exhibitions abroad.

The Believers was commissioned by the BredaPhoto festival (www.bredaphoto.nl) in The Netherlands and produced by the non-profit production house Forhanna (www.forhanna.com). The installation was edited by Noa Ben Shalom. The Israeli sound artist Eli Shargo composed a soundscape especially for this location.

The Believers is supported by Forhanna, Mondriaan Foundation, voordekunst and Mk2 and first shown at BredaPhoto 2018, 5-9/24-10.

 **BredaPhoto
Festival**

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PHOTOS - ILLUSTRATIONS

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=1hogzRzv7-qo5RppYz1ALMeWkwx3R27Zn>

This map contains the following images:

1. Age of Data
2. Baptism
3. Hadj
4. Holy_Fire
5. MidBurn
6. Samaritans
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8. The Believers_CCTV.jpg
9. The Believers_Ecstacy.jpg
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