

HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

How One Woman's Naked Photo Shoot Redefines The Nude In Art

The Huffington Post | By Priscilla Frank

If we had to make a sweeping generalization, we'd declare ourselves generally unimpressed by a contemporary (male) photographer capturing the (female) nude form. It's been done (so very many times) before. When said female body is sexualized and/or objectified, it only makes matters worse.

And yet, when an artist toys with the conventions associated with the history of nude photography, we're a bit more intrigued. Whether photographing an unconventional body type or a nude placed in a bizarre scenario, there are many ways to tinker with the time tested formula. In his series, mysteriously titled "Sunday," photographer Paul Kooiker does all of the above, rendering a nude photography series that resembles its traditional predecessors... and yet not quite.

"Sunday" features a model posing in her own garden, her body completely exposed, her face fully concealed. Her pale flesh contrasts sharply with the piercing colors in her natural surroundings, giving her a non-human, almost ghostly glow. Her body is contorted into folded and stretched positions that, though blatantly illicit, are not quite erotic. And her



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entire being is captured in such a motionless, colorless state, she appears more like a still life than a living, breathing human being.

As viewers, we feel simultaneously drawn to and repulsed by these NSFW images, the former for their surreal beauty and the latter for their voyeuristic and slightly pornographic perspective. We have a feeling this state of visual limbo is exactly what Kooiker had in mind.

With his paradoxical images, Kooiker places the viewer stumbling somewhere between the conventional and radical, the beautiful and grotesque, the artistic and pornographic, the human and other. As Ellyn Ruddick-Sunstein says in Feature Shoot: "Composed of contradictions, she lies just beyond our reach, existing as an object of substance while becoming mysteriously apparitional, a material form that verges precariously on the intangible."

Kooiker's photographs are currently on view at Steven Kasher Gallery in New York until October 25. Do you think Kooiker's voluptuous nudes stand apart from the (naked) herd? Let us know your thoughts in the comments.



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Courtesy Steven Kasher Gallery, New York