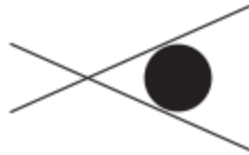


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Iñaki Domingo on Paul Kooiker, *Heaven*

Paul Kooiker *Heaven* Van Zoetendaal Amsterdam, 2012
Designed by Willem van Zoetendaal 13 $\frac{3}{8}$ x 9 $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (34 x 24
cm) 176 pages 494 photographs Hardcover
vanzoetendaal.com

Paul Kooiker is best known for his startling and singular photographs of voluptuous female forms, yet his individual images are incomprehensible except as a part that cumulatively make up his psychologically charged oeuvre. Kooiker's photographs do not allow for comfortable looking, instead demonstrating his fascination with the game of perception. He uses a visual language that is both dry and delicate, and that pushes at the limits of the unnerving, forcing us to keep our guard up and making us acknowledge our act of looking at these women's bodies.

Kooiker's work continues themes explored frequently throughout the history of representation: the relationship of the artist and the model, between the subject and the object of representation. Voyeurism is an ineluctable constant in his work, but it seems as if an explicit sexuality has been (somewhat surprisingly) kept away from his images. Furthermore, he manages to endow the female bodies of his models with a rotund material quality that goes beyond the merely corporeal, and is in line with artists such as Carlo Mollino or Boris Mikhailov.

In *Heaven*, his most recent publication, the author invites us to consider personal imagery gathered during the last twelve years through a selection of almost five hundred Polaroids that span multiple genres. From his most intimate photographs to the preparatory works created during studio sessions, from landscapes to street photography, these images always convey the fresh and direct style that results from the mastery of a tool that is at the service of his needs. In a sense, he shares with us his creative process when it is still unfinished. It seems that each step of the decision-making process is shared with his audience—as if we

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are voyeurs peering in upon the process of a voyeur.

The complex and, apparently, random narrative structure is the most prominent feature of this photobook, which is conceived as a journal that records Kooiker's anxieties and obsessions in the course of everyday life. Notwithstanding the personal nature of this work, it is important to point out the impeccable editorial production of this title. Wise choices as to the format, materials, design, and printing strengthen Kooiker's project and denote the close and prolific relationship he maintains with his editor, Willem van Zoetendaal, with whom he has published the majority of his books. The rhythm, the typology, and the number of images per page change through the book in a manner that seems to follow the author's impulses. Throughout, Kooiker adheres to the grid, a very demanding element in terms of layout, in an exercise of Cartesian rationalism that counterbalances the personal nature of the imagery. Added to this is the disquieting presence of blank space, used as a narrative element that allows us to perceive, over and over again, the idea of the ellipsis—that is to say, what is missing, what is left out.

Iñaki Domingo is photographer and photo editor. He is a founding member of the NOPHOTO collective and his photographic works are represented by Ines Barrenechea Gallery. He is co-editor of the blog 30y3.com, which specializes in Spanish contemporary photography, and he is editorial coordinator at Ivorypress publishing house, where he is the photo editor of C Photo.