

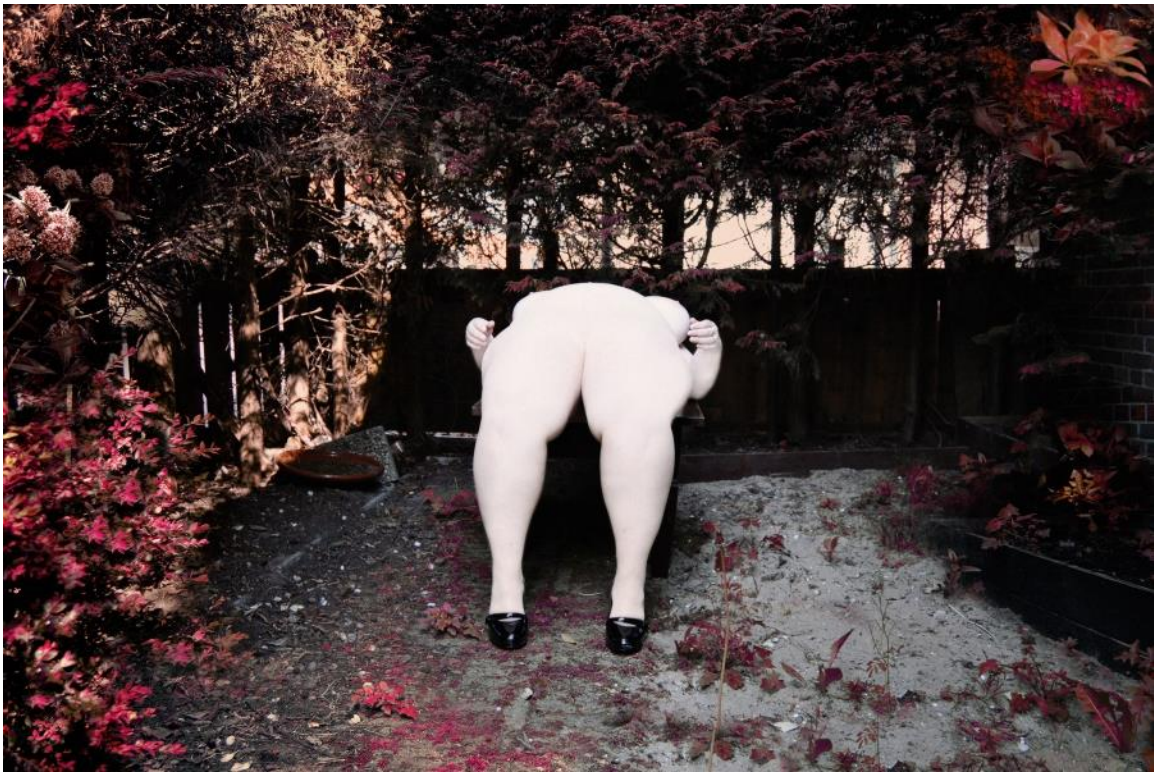
STEVEN
KASHER
GALLERY

COLLECTOR
DAILY

Paul Kooiker @Steven Kasher

By Loring Knoblauch October 3, 2014

JTF (just the facts): A total of 17 large scale color photographs, framed in white and unmatted, and hung against white walls in the two room divided gallery space. All of the works are archival pigment prints, made between 1999 and 2014 and printed in 2014. The 10 works from the Sunday series are sized either roughly 39×59 or 32×95 and are available in editions of 3. The 6 works from the Hunting and Fishing series are sized roughly 24×18 each and are available in editions of 10. The single work from Room Service is sized 60×110 and is unique.



Comments/Context: While the objectification of the female body is nothing new in the history of photography, Paul Kooiker's newest show pushes on the underlying psychology of the genre of the female nude. Alternately the sculptor, the intellectual, and the voyeur in the different series on view, the Dutch photographer adds a layer of unease to his celebrations of beauty, transforming straightforward nudes into images with much more controversial potency and complexity.

STEVEN KASHER GALLERY

In his Sunday series, Kooiker literally puts the female body on a pedestal, posing a robustly fleshy nude model on coffee tables and cloth covered boxes, surrounded by leafy fall gardens and makeshift studio backdrops. But instead of depicting her curvy body with proportion and detail, he purposely washes it out into a sculptural expanse of flat blank white, puzzlingly punctuated by black pumps. Her body becomes a featureless (and faceless) form with legs, its whiteness a stark contrast to the warm orange and brown colors in the surroundings. As she bends, kneels, lays, and balances on the overly small support, she becomes an echo of a Henry Moore sculpture, albeit with a surreal fetishized twist.

Kooiker's Hunting and Fishing series has a subtly darker tone. Lively nude women are seen from behind, running through heaths and grasslands; whether they are frolicking or aggressively being pursued is left to our imagination. Captured in blurred motion, they aesthetically combine Ryan McGinley and Mirosław Tichy, where playful voyeurism might actually be something more like a serious game of predator and prey. While the images can seem fuzzily lovely and breezily sexy at first glance, their unsettling tone gives them a stringent aftertaste.

Kooiker's massive Room Service grid of images mixes the physical with the intellectual, posing various curvy nudes in front of dense bookshelves. Fragmented breasts and bottoms in various tinted colors distract us from the stacks, intermingling two kinds of desire like a meeting of the naked book club. Again, the photographs have a sense of interwoven fetishes that challenges accepted norms.

Seen together, Kooiker's various bodies of work tightly coalesce around unpacking the baggage of the female nude. He's rejected the classic Modernist nude and the glamorous fashion shot, opting to probe the nuanced underlayers of the genre. That his work is so full of uncomfortable contradictions is a testament to his expertise in routinely testing the limits of the observer/observed relationship.

Collector's POV: The works in this show are priced as follows. The prints from the Sunday series are \$10000 each, while those from Hunting and Fishing are either \$4000 or \$5000. The single large grid from Room Service is \$25000. Kooiker's work has little secondary market history at this point, so gallery retail likely remains the best option for those collectors interested in following up.