

TRANQUIL STORIES WITH A SENSE OF EERINESS • ELLEN KOOI



*You are mistaken if you think the Dutch photographer promises serenity to the characters she positions in spacious backdrops...*



To be able to seamlessly fuse the organic shapes of a landscape with the eerie world of the subconscious, like the natural, inevitable and genuine unison of light and shadows... In her fictional visual realms, photographer Ellen Kooi places her characters in wider rural settings, where they are likely to feel most

comfortable. However, it is not long before you feel that something is wrong in the images, which initially deliver peace to the onlooker: the colours, the facial expressions, and sometimes the choreographies are details which Kooi prefers to point out with skill. She is attracted to mystery, uncertainty, disappointment, duality, solitude and conflict. Accompanied by striking décor and choreography, the stories of different characters - whether looking guilty, defiant, timid, alone, preoccupied, lost or alienated from society - progress at a degree of calmness that complements the sense of eeriness.

Born in 1962, Kooi was trained at the Academie Minerva in Groningen, before completing a doctorate at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, in Amsterdam. She appeared in exhibitions throughout the '90, but her breakthrough came in the 2000s with solo and group exhibitions which travelled the world. La Casa Encendida (Madrid), Torch Gallery (Amsterdam), Galerie Les Filles du Calvaire (Paris), Catharine Clark Gallery (San Francisco), PPOW Gallery (New York), Beaumontpublic (Luxembourg), Centre d'Art Tecla Sala (Barcelona) and Borusan Sanat (Istanbul) are only some of the galleries that have exhibited her works.

To achieve the level of emotional intensity she seeks in the models, Kooi spends most of her time working with them, finding the best poses and expressions, developing choreographies and post-shoot digital manipulations. It would not be wrong to seek traces of her 'playful' approach towards photography in her former career as a theatre and performance photographer. Acting is a major source of inspiration in Kooi's stories, probably because of her passion for drama. Her focus on stories and narration, by incorporating practical knowledge on performance, suggests that her creative process also feeds on the flukes of the mind. If we were to embark on a mental journey, it would be impossible to tell how much time we would spend on true stories and their reimagined versions, and how much on dreams and fantasy. In her images, which give the impression that memory is constantly recreated, Kooi is probably seeking an answer to this question. Taking her time, playing with possibilities...

























