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**Isabelle van Zeijl 'The Camouflaged Beauty of Fashion'  
Presented by The Cynthia Corbett Gallery**

Royal Opera Arcade Gallery, Pall Mall, St James, London  
24 – 30 June 2019



From L-R: Isabelle van Zeijl, 'I LOVE HER I', 2019, C-Type mounted on dibond; Isabelle van Zeijl, 'OWN', 2019, C-Type mounted on dibond.

This June, The Cynthia Corbett Gallery will present the largest solo photography exhibition to date by Dutch artist, Isabelle van Zeijl, at the Royal Opera Arcade Gallery, Pall Mall, from 24 – 30 June 2019, as part of Mayfair Art Weekend.

'The Camouflaged Beauty of Fashion' will bring together Isabelle van Zeijl's varied body of enigmatic photographic self-portraits, which challenge the oppressive idealisation of beauty. The works take female archetypes of the past and sabotage them in the context of today, by referencing and merging imagery from a historical context, particularly works of the Old Masters, with modern-day consumer content. The result, van Zeijl's unique female characters, confront notions of perceived femininity and the significance of aesthetics throughout history and society.

'The Camouflaged Beauty of Fashion' will display nearly twenty of van Zeijl's large-scale photographic works. In addition to physical appearance, the pieces draw on a number of themes that come under the construct of beauty: fashion, nature and time. These aspects are also reflected through the artistic process, as van Zeijl collectively embodies the roles of: model, creator, object and subject, producing the entirety of the scenes independently, from the costume design and make-up, to the lighting and editing.

In this respect, Van Zeijl's creative process is highly self-reflective and one that requires a constant procedure of mental and visual reinvention. Van Zeijl's self-portraits are a mode of self-expression, illustrating her strength of character as well as her fragility, in turn confronting and disputing the

notion that women are limited to being either vulnerable or strong, one or the other. Her works go beyond the realm of individual expression, so common in the genre of self-portraiture, as the artist strives to be both universal and timeless, with a subtle political hint.

At first glance, viewers could mistake van Zeijl's portraits for subversive portrayals of noblewomen painted by Dutch Golden Age Masters. In 'HER', the artist has created an intricate headpiece from vintage lace, which draws on references to women of the past, while the pose and expression stand very much in modern times. In the series 'The Jane', the artist wears historic armour from the 1600s. This powerful heroine not only displays physical strength, but also emotional and tangible empowerment.

It is through this exploration and manipulation of the visual vocabulary of the past and the implementation of modern photographic technology, that her work possesses a timeless beauty, transcending the boundaries of epoch and media, whilst simultaneously tackling contemporary standards of aesthetics.

Van Zeijl's unique assimilation of the past and present drew judges to bestow on her the Highly Commended award for The Young Masters Emerging Woman Art Prize in 2017. The Young Masters Art Prize was founded by Cynthia Corbett in 2009 and launched to celebrate artistic skill and innovation, alongside an awareness of the Old Masters and historical works. The Young Masters Emerging Women Art Prize was a new part of the initiative and the judges included Nadja Swarovski.

Isabelle van Zeijl has collaborated with a number of celebrated fashion designers, including Iris Van Herpen, Claes Iversen and Jan Taminiau. Taminiau created the couture dress worn by the artist in 'GRACE', adding to the ethereal aesthetic of the work. In the 'I AM' series, 2019, the artist has reshaped and sabotaged the couture designs of Claes Iversen into entirely new forms. The striking textures and Dégradé colours are reworked to indicate the process of natural and instinctive growth, illustrating the transformation from one phase of life to another; including the metamorphosis of a child into a woman, and understanding one's true value and self-worth.

Similarly, the Phalaenopsis orchids presented in 'THE ONE', 'SHE IS' and 'OWN', call into question the fleeting, yet joyous and bountiful nature of beauty. Isabelle collaborated with florist, Paul Wijkmeijer to make the striking head-piece a reality. Acknowledging the feminine life-cycle, van Zeijl allows her practice to evolve as nature takes its course, and offers an alternative concept of beauty, symbolising the reinvention of the self. This series is a tribute to the on-going changes of life – translating natural beauty inherent in death and decay.

'The Camouflaged Beauty of Fashion' marks a pivotal moment in Isabelle van Zeijl's career, presenting her dynamic and powerful creations in close proximity to one another, charting her journey of personal exploration.

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

### **ABOUT ISABELLE VAN ZEIJL**

Isabelle van Zeijl has shown work continuously and internationally over the past ten years, represented by galleries located in The UK, The Netherlands, Belgium, and New York, and exhibiting at emerging and established international art fairs in New York, Miami, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, London, Germany, Belgium, Sweden and Italy. She was nominated for the Prix De La Photographie Paris, and The Fine Art Photography Awards. She was also one of the recipients of the inaugural Young Masters Emerging Women Art Prize, London. Her work is held in private collections in the USA, UK, Belgium, Germany, and The Netherlands.

#### **ABOUT THE CYNTHIA CORBETT GALLERY**

The Cynthia Corbett Gallery, a London-based contemporary art gallery established in 2004, represents contemporary artists and is a regular exhibitor at major international contemporary art fairs. The gallery has an annual exhibition programme in London, New York, Miami and California. The Gallery works with a number of established American, British, European and Middle Eastern artists whose works have been published and acquired by international museums and institutions including; The Related Group (Jorge Perez), Miami, Florida; 21c Museum, Louisville, Kentucky; The Jordan Schnitzer Family Foundation, Portland, Oregon and the V&A, London.

In 2009, Cynthia Corbett launched the Young Masters Art Prize, a not-for-profit initiative that gives a platform to both emerging and established artists who pay homage to the skill and innovation of the Old Masters and art of the past. The 2014 edition saw the launch of the Young Masters Maylis Grand Ceramic Prize for artists working in ceramics. In 2017, the Young Masters Emerging Women Art Prize was launched to profile and reward the work of an emerging female artist. The ten-year anniversary will be marked this year by the fifth edition of the prize, to be held in London during Frieze week in October 2019.

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