

Mariane Ibrahim Gallery is delighted to present the second solo exhibition dedicated to the Belgian born photographer, Sofie Knijff. The exhibition will open on September 7 and will run until October 13.

Tales features over a dozen photographs of new portraits and landscapes in various countries. The photographer looks at the stories and tales children grow up hearing. Fairy tales have been present throughout time and across cultural backgrounds. Stories that generally begin with 'once upon a time' and usually end with 'happily ever after'. How do these narratives differ across cultures? Where do the different stories intersect?

Knijff invites us to explore a world of her making: steeped in a theatrical frame. She approaches her subjects from behind the curtain. In line with a long tradition of classical portrait photography, reminiscent of classic Dutch painting, her work stands out for its ability to meld seamlessly into one image the documentary and the fabricated, the real and the imaginary.

Although staged, she aspires to maintain the whimsical spontaneity of her models by inviting them to choose a disguise and 'play' their favorite character in her studio. In their other world, children appear as princes and princesses, heroes, shamans, chiefs, and spirits. In a furtive moment, the children permit the photographer to capture a glimpse of their greatest aspirations. Rarely, can one distant him or herself from these portraits. We were all children; and all children will eventually be nostalgic adults longing for their youth. Where did our child reveries go? This is Sophie Knijff's primary question.

Behind the masks that we as adults use to deal with the world's harsh realities, resides our inner child who stills dreams and plays. Children reveal a subconscious experience. They provide us with the tools to understand who we are and how to cope with life's obstacles and dangers, Knijff acutely applies her mastery of dramaturgy to open a dialogue about the veracity of a contemporary portrait--approaching spaces as scenery and people as characters.

As follow up her earlier research into children, *Tales* reflects on the meaning and poignancy of fairy tales across various cultures in the contemporary moment.

About

Sofie Knijff is a Dutch-Belgian photographer based in Amsterdam. As a young adult, she lived between Curaçao, Belgium, The Netherlands, Luxembourg, and Paris, and developed over the years a strong internal fascination for different cultures and identities. She began her artistic trajectory studying theatre and received her diploma in theater performance in 1998 from the Toneelacademie in Maastricht (NL). It was only in 2003 that she entered the Fotoacademie Amsterdam to pursue studies in photography. Certainly, this unique background in theater is reflected in the photographic universe Sofie Knijff invites us to explore. Her artistry owes much to the notions and techniques she learned as a performer: approaching spaces as scenery and people as characters.

Her work has been published and exhibited internationally in galleries, museums, and art fairs. Recently, her artistic projects have received grants from the Mondrian Foundation and shortlisted for the Unseen Photo Fair Dummy Award (2012), Mack Book Award (2013) and Best Photobook Award Kassel (2015) amongst others.