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Brancolini Grimaldi

MONA KUHN — *Native*

Gallery Hotel Art

12 January – 15 March 2012



Mona Kuhn, Marina, *Native*, 2009

The collaboration between BrancoliniGrimaldi and Gallery Hotel Art has brought to the Florentine and International audience some of the finest and cutting-edge contemporary artists for over a decade. The programme that we have been developing for the hotel's exhibition space has been specifically conceived to approach and propose new artistic trends, visions and themes.

This January 2012 we are proud to present at the Gallery Hotel Art the exhibition *Native* by Mona Kuhn. For this series, the photographer returned to her homeland Brazil led by the desire to understand the relationship with the place where she had spent the first twenty years of her life. "It is not meant to be about Sao Paolo. It is about a mood, it is about Brazil, about a bird returning to a nest in the forest."

We decided to propose this specific body of work by Mona Kuhn for the remarkable consistency in her imagery and the emotional commitment that the project implied for Mona. Her visual journey fuses together photographs of nature and people in a highly personal portrait of a place seen through the artist's eyes and imagination. The perception of her personal connection to this country is surprisingly strong and vivid yet she has been so subtly able to convey it through each single photograph.

Native is Kuhn's interpretation of her own feelings about her homeland from the point of view of an adult. She strongly highlighted, though, that she didn't want it to be an autobiographical narrative but an inspirational tale. She rejected the idea of focusing on the cliché of Brazil as the country of the Carnival, the Bossanova, the extreme poverty, the criminality, the shining sun and the long and wide white beaches. Her interest was in the intimate experience and emotions of living in this special land. She wanted to work with the colours that she felt were truly representative of Brazil in her mind and memories: all the shades of green, yellow and pink. Green is the forest, the jungle, the militarism that characterized Brazil's history for a long time; yellow and pink reference the early European Baroque influence and the iconic golden brightness of Brazil's natural lighting.

The location was set in an apartment in the very centre of downtown Sao Paolo, in one of the oldest areas of the city, that had been abandoned for more than twenty-five years. There she could find the vibe that she was looking for to communicate the peculiar feel of abstraction of a place of "fantasy". One of the main characters is the jungle itself with its sultry beauty that stands as a metaphor for spirituality and instincts, adventures and fears.

The subjects of Kuhn's photographs are not stereotypes, but her Brazilian peers. They are real, contemporary people, part of the same generation as hers. As usual she photographed naked young men and women, though she is not interested in them being naked. Rather she is focused on the body as a residence of who we are. It is a nudity that is far and distant from wanting to be intentionally sexy and sensual. They are caught in a pensive and quiet state that the photographer achieved patiently working to establish a genuine relationship of trust. She avoided using a tripod—or any other artificial props—and being assisted during the shooting in order to make people feel comfortable and naturally at ease with her. We find Mona Kuhn's work engaging for its multifaceted personality that is her signature visual style and expression of an intuitive way of creating.