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One for all: Rineke Dijkstra's portraits go on show at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art

By Grace Banks (November 30, 2017)



Installation view of 'The One and the Many' by Rineke Dijkstra at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Photography: Poul Buchardt / Brøndum & Co

Dutch photographer Rineke Dijkstra once said of her work, 'I never have a fixed idea when I photograph someone. Of course I have a preconceived notion of the background, and the light, but never the person. I don't like to give too many directions. For me it's important that a pose arises sort of unconsciously or naturally.'

Her first major retrospective, held at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Denmark, is a testament to this now trademark natural pose that the photographer manages to bring out in all of her subjects. From her mother-daughter portrait *Marianna and Sasha* (2014), to two grungy

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teenagers lounging in the park, *Vondelpark* (2005), Dijkstra's work is quickly recognised through this nonchalant gaze that centers her subject, however young or old, as rare and otherworldly.

Showcasing a mix of work from her two-decade long career, 'The One and the Many' explores the way much of Dijkstra's oeuvre continues the legacy of the Dutch Masters, from her native Netherlands. Like the Dutch tradition, the photographer takes local, normal people from small towns and turns them into the *pièce de résistance* of her art. Such is the dignity she offers her subject in *Almerisa, Leidschendam* (2000), that it becomes similar to the modern day *Girl With a Pearl Earring* (1665) by Vermeer.

The exhibition traces the evolution of Dijkstra's intimate portraiture style and how it's the product of her own down-to-earth non-ego. Her main concern is connecting with her subject on a simple and human level. 'I try to capture something of the personality of these people,' she says, 'but at the same time extract something universal relating to humanity in general.'

Other works exhibited like *Jalta, Ukraine* (1993), show how Dijkstra's manipulation of the unique Netherlands light have become a calling card of her work. Using this light, she adds a sense of divinity to her subjects. Despite being a simple beach shot in a chlorine-faded one-piece, the photograph *Kolobrzeg* (1992) nods to Botticelli's *The Birth of Venus*, a classic motif from this master of Dutch painting.

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