

IKON

a.topos

Kate Groobey

Pure Pleasure

8 May – 22 June 2019

Castello 2432, Fondamenta dei Penini



Kate Groobey, *Places Unknown* (2018), video performance, 1.39 mins. Courtesy the artist.

Ikon and a.topos present *Pure Pleasure* (2018) by British artist Kate Groobey. Consisting of video, dressed mannequin and paintings, this installation – coinciding with the opening of the Venice Biennale 2019 - is as joyful as it is philosophical, informed by the artist's feminist observations of art history.

At LACMA, I stood looking at a Picasso painting called Man and Woman where the male figure is pointing a knife at the woman's vagina, when a male security guard (laughing) said, "Picasso was a pig!" That encounter stuck with me and I started to make my Pure Pleasure paintings. I turned my attention to an unexplored perspective in the history of painting, that of a woman

painting her female lover, woman on woman, with a desiring female gaze. I realised that when we see a female figure in a painting we are only used to seeing the desiring male gaze or self-portraits. Kate Groobey, 2018

Groobey was born in Leeds (1979). She studied fine art in Oxford and London, and now lives between Yorkshire and the south of France. The latter, with its landscape and lifestyle sharply contrasting with the milieu of her upbringing, inspired her to embark on a series entitled *The Good Life* (2017), paintings and videos that depict friends and acquaintances aspiring to a wholesome balance between physical and mental wellbeing. There is joie de vivre in their reading, swimming and playing outdoors, but with typical wit Groobey conveys her humane understanding of the difference between ambition and actual achievement.

The Good Life evolved into *Pure Pleasure*. In a recent interview Groobey explained that she painted a series of nudes and portraits of her partner while they were travelling through California, and this inspired the title:

[It] was something flippant she said, 'I am pure pleasure', but that phrase seemed to me to sum up my feelings about the landscape, about paint, about her and about the time of year; it was the start of summer.

There are many, mainly male, artistic precedents for Groobey's nudes in landscapes -such as Rembrandt, Gauguin and Picasso - a tradition she acknowledges and revels in. Her videos feature her dancing as different painted characters against landscape backdrops, accompanied by happy homemade soundtracks, as she embraces the complexity of sexual politics with a life enhancing spirit.

Exhibition organised by Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK and a.topos, Venice, Italy.

For more information, high-res images and to request interviews please contact Emily Luxford on 0121 248 0708 or email e.luxford@ikon-gallery.org

Exhibition Dates: 8 May – 22 June 2019

Opening reception: Wednesday 8 May 2019, 6.30 – 10pm

Location: Castello 2432, Fondamenta dei Penini, 30122, Venezia

Vaporetto: Arsenale, ACTV 1 - 4.1 - 4.2, Alilaguna linea blu / Celestia, ACTV 4.1 - 4.2 - 5.1 - 5.2

Opening Hours: Closed on Tuesdays otherwise open daily 10am – 6pm

Social Media Handles:

Instagram: [@ikongallery](#) / [@atoposvenice](#) / [@kategroobey](#)

Twitter: [@ikongallery](#)

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Links: ikon-gallery.org / atoposvenice.com / kategroobey.com

-ENDS-

Notes to Editors:

1. Event: Kate Groobey in conversation with Ikon Director Jonathan Watkins, 13 May 2019, 6pm
2. Kate Groobey won the Daiwa Foundation Art Prize in 2018, the first woman in the history of the award. The Daiwa Foundation Art Prize offers a British artist a first solo show at a gallery in Japan. For Kate Groobey, the prize included an invitation to exhibit at Mizuma Art Gallery, Tokyo, Japan in Autumn 2018.
3. Kate Groobey's recent solo exhibitions include: *I'm Made of Milk*, Horton Gallery, New York (2017); *The Good Life*, Ever Gold [Projects], San Francisco (2017); *Perfect Potatoes*, Redling Fine Art, Los Angeles (2016); *Perfect | Parfait* performance, David Lynch Club Silencio, Paris (2015); *Ofr*. Invites Kate Groobey, Paris (2014).
4. Ikon is an internationally acclaimed contemporary art venue situated in central Birmingham. Established in 1964 by a group of artists, Ikon is an educational charity and works to encourage public engagement with contemporary art through exhibiting new work in a context of debate and participation. The gallery programme features artists from around the world and a variety of media is represented, including sound, film, mixed media, photography, painting, sculpture and installation. Ikon's off-site programme develops dynamic relationships between art, artists and audiences outside the gallery. Projects vary enormously in scale, duration and location, challenging expectations of where art can be seen and by whom. Education is at the heart of Ikon's activities, stimulating public interest in and understanding of contemporary visual art. Through a variety of talks, tours, workshops and seminars, Ikon's Learning Team aims to build dynamic relationships with audiences, enabling visitors to engage with, discuss and reflect on contemporary art. Ikon is open Tuesday – Sunday and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11am - 5pm. Admission is free. Ikon Gallery is supported using public funding from Arts Council England and Birmingham City Council. ikon-gallery.org
5. a.topos is an international curatorial collective born in Venice in 2018 to provide the city with a space to exhibit art, promote reflection, create dialogue and share experiences within the contemporary art scene. Living in Venice can be considered nothing less than a blessing. A city that breathes art and architecture from the different narrow streets that compose this fantastic maze. An open-air museum, some would say. Exactly for being among the fortunate ones, we can also recognize what the Laguna lacked. Just like its four co-founders - Fernanda Andrade (Brazil), Yasmine Helou (Italy-Lebanon), Hesperia Illiadou-Suppiej (Cyprus) and Lucia Trevisan (Italy) – a.topos seeks to give visibility to emerging artists and to enhance the notoriety of those not yet sufficiently exhibited. In addition to being an exhibition space, this enterprise works as an "open lab" for educational activities such as talks and debates. By gathering professionals from different backgrounds in a fertile exchange, a.topos contributes to construct new interpretations concerning art and, therefore, to keep its organicity and vivacity.

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Kate Groobey, *Pure Pleasure* (2018), video performance, 2.05 mins. Courtesy the artist.



Kate Groobey, *Agony & Ecstasy* (2018), video performance, 1.19 mins. Courtesy the artist.



Kate Groobey, *Give Me What I Want* (2018), video performance, 2.10 mins. Courtesy the artist.