

Press Release

MONA KUHN / *Native*

5 June to 31 July

Opening: Tuesday 5 June / 8 p.m.

***On the occasion of PhotoEspaña'12 Galería Pilar Serra presents Native, Mona Kuhn's second exhibition in Madrid following Evidence. In this project, the photographer returns to her native Brazil in an attempt to meet up once more with her origins, an exercise in memory which seeks a personal confluence between past and present. Elegant nudes and images of lush vegetation interlace a narration that delves into the essence of this South American country.***

Unhurried beauty, stripped of artifices and unnecessary tensions, is one of the primary characteristics of the photographs of Mona Kuhn (Sao Paulo, 1969), belonging to that classic – and very complicated – genre which she has cultivated since the start and which consists of the nude. Her protagonists – non-professional models – are captured from the calmness and naturalness of intimacy, and although they shun sophistication it seems that among them and those spaces they inhabit, a dialogue is woven, a hidden history, which attracts us and about which we want to know more.

In this case there exists a narrative thread directly connecting the characters of the series with Kuhn's own biography, with her Brazilian origins and her first twenty years, lived in a country to which she has never returned, until this moment, until *Native*. The project arises out of the artist's need to recover her past, to reappropriate it and recognise possible links with her present, thereby shaping a kind of parallel reality in which she portrays people who could well be her in circles which could also be hers. She recovers a state of mind, a feeling of what to her eyes was – and now is – Brazil, a mixture of real and imaginary experiences which promote a work of situations halfway between the dreamlike and the physical.

It is the “bird's flight back to its nest in the forest”, as Kuhn herself suggests. For that reason, between the characters and the photographer there exists an undeniable and palpable link, a profound complicity which permits that naturalness in the bodies, that elegance and balance provoked by a feeling of not being observed, not being intimidated by the outside, one of the most beautiful powers of Mona Kuhn's work, and which leads her to working directly with her camera, without professional models or assistants or tripods.

The interiors contribute even more to this sensation of an intimate world, of timeless space which welcomes that emotional commitment and allows it to be given form. The apartment in which the project is developed is located in the very heart of Sao Paulo, a location – at one time residential and now in decline – which contains in its ambivalences and colours an important symbology that can be seen in all of her photos. Green, pink and yellow represent the actual characteristics of the country: its geography, the jungle, the militarism; the skin and the flesh; its European influence and the splendour of the fifties. On the other hand, the instinctive and the wild, the sensuality and the exotic, all are associated with photos of damp vegetation, of leafy jungles, without human figures, which function as a pause and counterpoint to the entire narration.

Mona Kuhn was born in Sao Paulo, Brazil, in 1969 into a family of German descent. She graduated from Ohio State University and then from the San Francisco Art Institute. Since 1998 she has been carrying out complementary studies in the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles. In 2006 she was selected for the *BMW – ParisPhoto* photography prize. Her work has been exhibited in galleries and institutions in San Francisco, Atlanta, New York, Berlin and now in Madrid. Mona Kuhn has produced three monographs published by Steidl: *Mona Kuhn: Photographs* (2004), *Mona Kuhn: Evidence* (2007) and *Mona Kuhn: Native* (2009).

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## Galería **Pilar Serra**