



JENKINS JOHNSON GALLERY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Polixeni Papapetrou: Stories from the Other Side

April 4 – June 1, 2013

Opening Reception:
Thursday, April 4, 6 – 8 PM
Discussion with Susan Bright
Thursday, April 4, 7 PM
[New York](#)



Hattah Man and Hattah Woman Study, 2012, pigment print, ed. of 8, 27 ½ x 41 3/8 in

Jenkins Johnson Gallery, New York, is pleased to present *Stories from the Other Side*, a solo exhibition of photographs by Polixeni Papapetrou. The exhibition features two of Papapetrou's most recently completed series, *The Ghillies* and *Between Worlds*, and will be her first solo show with Jenkins Johnson Gallery in New York. There will be an opening reception on Thursday, April 4 from 6 to 8 pm, which will feature a discussion with writer and curator Susan Bright at 7 pm. Accompanying the exhibition will be a full color catalogue entitled "The Ghillies" with an essay by Chris Healy, Associate Professor of Cultural Studies at the University of Melbourne.

Australian photographer Polixeni Papapetrou creates darkly whimsical images that grapple with conceptual definitions of childhood, both historically and in contemporary society. Addressing what it means to be a child, Papapetrou uses her work to argue that the institution of childhood is an adult construct created to satisfy roles in society. Like Bill Henson and Sally Mann, Papapetrou encountered controversy when a 2003 photograph of her nude six-year-old daughter, Olympia, entitled *Olympia as Lewis Carroll's Beatrice Hatch Before White Cliffs*, graced the cover of *Art Monthly Australia*. Complaints of child pornography and violations of child protection legislation followed, and Papapetrou began photographing children wearing masks or with their faces obscured as a way to remove the childhood identity and add an element of layering to the figures. Papapetrou is also inspired by the spectacle of dress-up and performance that appeared in 19th century French and English tableaux photography, so she looks to photographers like Julia Margaret Cameron, Lewis Carroll, and Clementina Lady Hawarden. She finds further inspiration in the work of photographers, like Diane Arbus, Roger Ballen, Richard Billingham, Martin Parr, and Nan Goldin, who portray the everyday world around them and in doing so reveal a secluded inner world. Papapetrou's work is often compared to that of Cindy Sherman for her presentation of such a varied array of characters and personalities.

In Papapetrou's most recent body of work, *The Ghillies*, organic figures emerge from the ground, creating an almost symbiotic relationship with the landscape; the figures change color and shape according to the different landscapes and costumes they inhabit. A ghillie suit was originally devised for hunting and combat, and they were taken into the field to act as a decoy, disguised with matter from that landscape in order to blend with their surroundings. Papapetrou's son introduced her to ghillies through his interest in the *Call of Duty* video game, in which players use ghillie suits in order to become snipers and conceal themselves within the terrain. Photographing her son in the natural Australian landscape, Papapetrou addresses a boy's transformation from a youth into adulthood, and the institutional camouflages he must take on to fit in with his peers and society. Papapetrou states, "I wanted to make a body of work that looked at what it felt like to be a boy going through adolescence."



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Papapetrou also addresses childhood in her iconic series *Between Worlds*, in which she photographs children amongst the Australian landscape in various animal masks. This construct addresses childhood as a transitional space between infancy and the adult world in the same way that these animal-human hybrids exist in a space between human and non-human. The anthropomorphic figures spring directly from the artist's imagination.

Papapetrou has stated that even though children have assimilated into adult culture, they still maintain spontaneous animal impulses, which speak to the idea of having one foot in each world. Rather than taking on stereotypical animal roles, Papapetrou's figures take on human-like behavior, which is furthered by titles that add further depth to the works.

Papapetrou is a 2009 winner of the Josephine Ulrick & Win Schubert Photography Award, a 2007 Bundanon Trust, Artist in Residence, New South Wales and has won the Visual Art and Crafts Board, Australia Council, New Work Grant four times. Papapetrou is in countless private collections

worldwide and is in such prestigious public collections as the Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; Museum of Fine Arts, St. Petersburg; National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne; and National Library of Australia, Canberra, amongst others.



The Visitor, 2012, pigment print, ed. of 8, 27 ½ x 41 in

Concurrent with this exhibition, several institutions across the globe are exhibiting Polixeni Papapetrou's work including *Between Worlds* at Fotográfica Bogotá at the Fundación Gilberto Alzate Avendaño in Bogota, Columbia from May 7 to June 15 2013; a selection of Papapetrou's work dating from the late 80s to the present at the Centre for Contemporary Photography in Melbourne Australia from May 24 – July 4, 2013; and *Between Worlds'* at The Hellenic Museum in Melbourne, Australia from July 9 to August 8, 2013.

For visuals or more information please visit www.jenkinsjohnsongallery.com or contact Karen Gilbert at 212-629-0707 or kgilbert@jenkinsjohnsongallery.com