

## Caroline May

Of both Greek and English descent, Caroline May's photographic work approaches issues of gender, sexuality and identity in society with a curiosity that reveals an artist with ongoing questions linked to how society mediates its stereotypes, how people perceive each other, and what this reveals about people as both individuals and as a collective. Having studied at the University of Kent, where she embarked on a BA in Cultural Studies, May then went on to the London College of Printing for a Master's, where she further developed her interest in the themes that recur in her photographic work.



### You are half-English, half-Greek; has your cultural background influenced you as an artist?

Definitely. It is a privilege to have immediate access to both cultures. I was born in Essex, but I came back to Greece as soon as I was born. I went to school here, at a Greek-French school in Aghia Paraskevi, and then went to the United Kingdom to study, stayed there for ten years and came back.

### Why did you come back?

I came back to Greece in 2001 just before the Olympics. It was an exciting time to be here. Taking into account that my work bares a lot of references to the Hellenistic sculpture and Greek philosophy it made perfect sense to be here. Even after Greece's recent bailout I still think there is a lot of potential here. Because things are a bit more chaotic and less fixed, there is a lot of opportunity to do things.

### Describe your work.

My work questions accepted codes of behavior and explores issues of identity and desire. I work mainly with photography but I have also resolved to installation to best illustrate my ideas. I'm interested in how we define things. It is important to raise questions as we are living in an important period when questions must be raised – in which we question values and the very way that we live. I think that the role of the artist is to raise questions.

### How does living in Greece inspire your work?

Greece has an important history from which one can draw endless inspiration. Athens in particular is chaotic, full of wild energy unlike any other European capital and everyday is different here.

### How would you describe the Greek contemporary art scene?

The contemporary art scene in Athens is small and hasn't become part of the general culture like in the UK. The absence of any state support in the form of residencies, grants etc is a drawback. Having said that, there are a number of galleries with a strong exhibition program, some very committed collectors, and plenty of interesting artists.

### You have a solo exhibition at the Freud Museum in London coming up. What will you be showing?

I am actually having a solo exhibition at the Freud Museum in London from 30 June–4 September. In order to open the dialogue and create a wider discourse I have also invited a number of international artists with similar concerns to take part in a group show concurrent with my solo exhibition entitled 'Les paris sont ouverts'. The title is after an essay by Claude Cahun written in the 1930s and it basically means that bets are open, everything is possible. Amongst the artists I have invited is Greek artist Dimitris Dokatzis whose work I find fascinating, as well as Maria Finn, Eve Fowler, Sharon Kivland, Linder, Lovett/Codagnone, Jeff Ono, Paul P. ❶

1. Caroline May - Untitled (both house), 2010 - Inkjet archival photographic print 100 x 100 cm - Courtesy the artist and The Apartment, Athens

2. Caroline May - Untitled, 2010 - Inkjet archival photographic print - 50 x 50 cm - Courtesy the artist and The Apartment, Athens