

DANZIGER

On Rivington

Karen Knorr - Europe and India.

April 13 - May 25.

For our third solo show of photographs by Karen Knorr, the gallery is presenting a selection of her constructed animal scenarios taken in both Europe and India. Shot between 2003 and 2016 in various European museums and stately homes and in Indian palaces and temples, Knorr's work explores the disjunction between nature and culture, bringing the historical tradition of picturing animals squarely into the 21st century.

In both series Knorr playfully combines technologies and genres, mixing digital and analogue, architectural and nature photography. Working in a predominantly digital format, images of interiors are combined with animal figures photographed separately and then inserted into the environment of the artist's choice. The boundaries of the real are thus challenged both by this hybrid process and also by the incongruity of the scenes. This ambiguity goes to the heart of Knorr's work and gives her images their force.

As Knorr points out, the usual aim of fables is to teach a lesson by drawing attention to animal behavior and its relationship to human actions and shortcomings. Animals in fables speak metaphorically of human folly, criticizing human nature. Yet in Knorr's universe, the animals are neither dressed up to resemble humans nor do they illustrate any explicit moral. Liberated from narrative constraints, they roam freely in human territory, drawing attention to the unbridged gap between nature and culture. They encroach into the domain of museums and palaces, showing us the incommensurable distance between two worlds: raw nature on the one hand and on the other the cultural site which allows nature entry only in the form of a representation.

Karen Knorr was born in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, raised in San Juan Puerto Rico, and educated in Paris and London. She has lived in England since the 1970s creating a large body of work that has developed a critical and playful dialogue with photography. Her themes range from investigating the patriarchal values of the English upper classes to addressing the role of animals and their representation in art. Using photography to explore cultural traditions, from the gentlemen's clubs of Saint James to the luxuriant interiors of Indian palaces, Knorr's work reaches out to engage conceptual art, visual culture, and feminism.

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From the 1980's onwards, Knorr's work has been increasingly engaged with examining issues of power that underlie cultural heritage. This is the principal theme of her work but one that lies subtly under the visual richness and inventiveness of her images. Knorr's photographs satisfy many of the requisites of traditional photography which address the surface appearance of a species or place, but then move to a paradoxical space where they begin to question the overt assumptions of the picture's content.