

# CASEMORE KIRKEBY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Viviane Sassen *Pikin Slee* & Elspeth Diederix *In These Shadows*  
November 4 - December 31, 2016  
Opening November 4th, 6-8pm

Casemore Kirkeby is pleased to present Viviane Sassen *Pikin Slee* & Elspeth Diederix *In These Shadows*, an exhibition of photographic works by two Dutch artists and longtime friends who live and work in Amsterdam. The exhibition opens alongside Viviane Sassen's participation in the Larry Sultan Visiting Artist Program, a collaboration between Pier 24 Photography, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and California College of the Arts, where she will be in conversation on Wednesday, November 2nd at 7pm.

Viviane Sassen and Elspeth Diederix first met in an art class as teenagers and have remained close friends throughout their adult lives. While they each came to photography by different routes, both cite their childhood experiences as Europeans living in Africa as formative to their sensibilities, and both create images that challenge the tendency to quickly categorize and make sense of what we see, especially when confronting a photograph. Instead they invite us into worlds that demand a sustained

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## KIRKEBY

attentiveness, where novelty and surprise are fully integrated into the surroundings and textures of the everyday, and images and objects resonate with their own strange authority. They also privilege the highly personal and subjective view as the most open-ended approach to their material; whether working at home or abroad, both artists are fine-tuned to the experience of displacement, of finding the familiar in the foreign and vice versa, and create a generous space for what lies between.

Known for her sculptural concern with form and expressive use of color, Viviane Sassen is one of a handful of photographers to move successfully between fashion photography and fine art, letting the two cross-pollinate in ways that are surprising, confusing and often surreal. In both realms, Sassen skillfully creates tension between what is visually explicit and what is covert or inscrutable, and is one of the most compelling contemporary photographers at work today. Casemore Kirkeby's exhibition features *Pikin Slee*, a body of work Sassen created in a remote village in Suriname, accessible only via a three-hour canoe journey into the rainforest. Formerly part of a Dutch colony, Pikin Slee was founded by Maroon people, African slaves who escaped the plantations, fled into the woods and made settlements. Sassen was drawn to the village, where the Saramacca community lives without running water, hardly any electricity or the internet and still speaks Dutch, for its complex connection to both the Netherlands and to Africa, where she has made much of her previous work. But Sassen's approach to this complexity is intimate and pared down, imbued with an elegant restraint that turns everyday sights in the village into offbeat meditations. Shooting mostly in black-and-white, and occasionally in color, Sassen intervened minimally in the daily routines of village life, instead adjusting her own position to allow space for what she found. The result is quiet and nuanced, with all the power of her incisive vision distilled to its most essential elements.

Elspeth Diederix's photographs appear otherworldly, but in fact they are very much of *this* world, and since 2009 often created in her "studio garden" in Amsterdam, or underwater in the murky depths off the coast of Holland. Steering clear of post-production trickery, the magic of Diederix's images is grounded in the physical world of her subjects—flowers combust as if from their own beauty and dandelions dangle in a web of nylon strings. Diederix started out as a painter and, after working in sculpture and installation, circled back to photography as a way to make permanent the fleeting arrangements she created in and around her studio. Photography allowed her a tremendous amount of flexibility to work with ephemeral materials and, when she moved to digital photography, to "paint" again with color and shadow. Informed by the traditions of Dutch still life painting and the reverence for what is not long for this world, Elspeth's Diederix's imagery is suffused with mystery and energy that seems generated from within the objects and situations she photographs. They loom like wonderful question marks, a reminder that so much is yet unknown.

Viviane Sassen was born in 1972 in Amsterdam. She first studied fashion design, followed by photography at the Utrecht School of the Arts (HKU) and Ateliers Arnhem. Her work was first published in avant-garde fashion magazines and is regularly commissioned by prominent designers. Sassen was included in the main exhibition of the 55th Venice Biennale, *The Encyclopedic Palace*, in 2013. A retrospective of 17 years of her fashion work, *In and Out of Fashion*, opened at Huis Marseille Museum for Photography, Amsterdam, in 2012, accompanied by a book published by Prestel (Munich); the exhibition travelled to the Rencontres d'Arles festival and then the Scottish National Portrait Gallery,

# CASEMORE KIRKEBY

Edinburgh, SCAD museum in Savannah and the Photomuseum Winterthur in Switzerland. The book won the Kees Scherer prize for best Dutch photography book of 2011/2.

Sassen was awarded the Dutch art prize, the Prix de Rome, in 2007, and in 2011 won the International Center of Photography in New York's Infinity Award for Applied/Fashion/Advertising Photography. She was one of six artists selected for the 2011 New Photography exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Solo exhibitions have taken place at FORMA in Milan (2009) and FOAM in Amsterdam (2008), and the ICA in London (2015) among other venues.

Elspeth Diederix was born in Nairobi, Kenya in 1971, and raised in Colombia. She studied painting and sculpture at the Gerrit Rietveld Academie in Amsterdam between 1990 and 1995, and at the Rijksakademie in Amsterdam from 1998-2000. Photography eventually proved to be the best medium for her to form her ideas; nevertheless, both painting and sculpture have been present in her work since the outset. In 2002, she won the prestigious Prix de Rome Photography award, and her works are in the collections of the Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; the AzkoNobel Art Foundation; and the AMC Art Collection, Amsterdam among others. Her publications include *Still Life Submerged* (2012), *These Things* (2005), and *Supernatural* (2003). The birth of her daughters has brought her focus towards her direct surroundings in recent years, such as the garden of her studio, 'An experiment in gardening and photography', that can be followed via the blog Studio Garden. During this period her work has become more organic and tactile, like in the projects *Still Life Submerged* and *Plumeria & Chicory*. A fascinating new development, drawing on the same motivation: the revelation of the sublime in the world around us.

Location: Casemore Kirkeby, 1275 Minnesota Street, #102, San Francisco, CA 94107

Show Title: Viviane Sassen *Pikin Slee* & Elspeth Diederix *In These Shadows*

Exhibition Dates: November 4 - December 31, 2016

Opening Reception: Friday, November 4, 6-8pm

Gallery Hours: Tuesday - Saturday, 11am - 6pm

For press inquiries, please contact Jennifer O'Keeffe at 415.851.9808 or [jennifer@casemorekirkeby.com](mailto:jennifer@casemorekirkeby.com)

**Images:** Left: Viviane Sassen, *Rorschach*, 2013. Ultrachrome print, 18 x 12 inches. Right: Elspeth Diederix, *Karawara & Frangipani*, 2014. Archival pigment print, 47-1/2 x 31-1/2 inches.