

HUXLEY-PARLOUR

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Ruud Van Empel
Portraits

22 February - 18 March 2017

Beetles+Huxley to stage the first exhibition devoted entirely to the portraiture of the pioneering Dutch photographer Ruud van Empel. The exhibition will include 21 works, including 12 from the photographer's latest series, Mood, which has never been shown in the UK before.

Ruud van Empel's distinctive style has evolved through an on going exploration of the tension between straight photography and digital technology. His images are digitally constructed from a synthesis of hundreds of diverse fragments taken from his own photographs. He digitally dissects and reconstructs images to create his works, as eyes, noses and lips are collaged together to create brand new faces. Ruud van Empel skilfully blends the techniques of collage, painting and photography, forcing the viewer to question their own conceptions of the constructed, and the 'real'.



Sunday #4, 2012

Throughout his career, Ruud van Empel has made photographs that connect with art history, interweaving references including Dutch Old Masters, German Renaissance painters and early photomontage artists into his work. His digitally rendered photographs of children explore notions of youth and innocence. Van Empel gathers his imagery from a wide range of sources including his own personal childhood memories.

New works on display, from the series Mood, continue this exploration of lost childhood innocence set against a backdrop of cultural conservatism. The images refer to stiflingly upright and formal early photographic portraits, but are given the close-up intimacy of the portrait miniature. Works from the Mood series are master works of pattern, texture and light effects. The dark, earthy tones and strong chiaroscuro give this series, more than any other of van Empel's, an atmospheric and dramatic tone. The images from Mood are to be set in the context of earlier works from his series Sunday, Identity, and critically acclaimed Moon and World.

Ruud van Empel was born in 1958 in Breda, the Netherlands and studied graphic design there at the Academie St. Joost. Van Empel worked initially as a theatre set designer. It was in 1995 that van Empel made the transition from stage to staged-photography, and began to experiment with digital collage. His work has since been exhibited worldwide by museums including Fotomuseum, Belgium, the Museum of Photographic Art, California, and George Eastman House, New York.

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