

## HUXLEY PARLOUR

VALÉRIE BELIN

PHOTOGRAPHS OF WOMEN

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20 FEBRUARY – 17 MARCH 2018

A new exhibition at Huxley Parlour gallery of work by Valérie Belin will focus on the French photographer's depictions of the female form throughout her career. The exhibition will showcase fifteen large-scale works created between 2001 and 2017, many of which will be on display in the UK for the first time.

Exploring issues of surface, artifice, identity and artificiality, Belin's work has often returned to the depiction of the human form at transformative moments. She has photographed bodybuilders and brides, as well as trans women at the very beginning of their journey into becoming female. Works on display in this exhibition will be taken from her series 'Transsexuals' (2001), 'Mannequins' (2003), 'Brides' (2012), 'Super Models' (2015), 'All Star' (2016), and her latest work 'Painted Ladies' (2017).

Belin's 2003 series, 'Mannequins', documented a series of shop-window mannequins originally cast from human models. Belin's use of composition and soft lighting heightens the ambiguous and uncanny nature of these inanimate objects, creating the appearance of delicate, living flesh in place of a cold, plastic surface. The recurring theme of constructed beauty in Belin's work addresses issues of reality and fiction within the photographic image. Belin revisits and develops this theme in her latest series, 'Painted Ladies', in which each portrait is named after the specific brushes used to paint the model's faces and the equivalent digital retouching tools used by Belin in post-production. The resulting imagery not only explores the relationship between painting and photography, but also manipulation – of both image and viewer.

The series 'All Star' interweaves photographic portraits with graphic imagery from comic books. Suggestive snippets of text and violent imagery burst through the surface of these portraits to infer the chaotic and agitated state that lies just beneath the calm surface of the subject's faces. These visually and psychologically complex works imply an overwhelming internal world inhabited by the young women in the photographs.

Valérie Belin was born in Boulogne-Billancourt, France in 1964, She trained at the École Nationale des Beaux-Arts in Bourges, before studying the philosophy of art at the Université Panthéon-Sorbonne in Paris. Belin's work has been exhibited at the Museum of Art, New York; Museum of Photography, Amsterdam; the Mori Art Museum, Tokyo, and was the focus of a major retrospective at the Centre Pompidou, Paris in 2015. Her work is housed in the collections of many notable institutions, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Musée d'art Moderne de la ville de Paris and Kunsthaus Zürich. She was awarded the sixth annual Prix Pictet in 2015 for her work exploring the theme of disorder. Belin lives and works in Paris.