

ART

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## Shutter babes

Rineke Dijkstra and Katy Grannan present new photo work By **Linda Yablonsky**

**K**aty Grannan and Rineke Dijkstra are portrait photographers who have pursued similar subjects— young people at defining moments in their lives—from entirely different perspectives. One artist is American, the other Dutch. Both are exhibiting new work in New York galleries, where Grannan seems to be playing Diane Arbus to Dijkstra's more sober August Sander.

Grannan first came to notice with a group of young female photographers who have steered a narrow course between setup scenarios and reportage. The most straightforward of the bunch, she advertised in small-town newspapers for models willing to be photographed in their homes. Respondents tended to be young, and many elected to pose either nude or nearly so. Grannan says that she only directs her sitters to do whatever will help them relax, and they do look at ease in her life-size color pictures. They also look ridiculous. That makes viewing them an uncomfortable experience.

Grannan exposes the dichotomy between self-image and reality even more explicitly in two new series: small black-and-white portraits at Salon 94, and a group of large color prints at Artemis Greenberg Van Doren. For the former, Grannan again photographed strangers in their homes, amid interiors that appear uniformly florid and garish, even in black and white. The color

**Rineke Dijkstra**  
Marian Goodman Gallery,  
through October 11.  
(see 57th Street area).

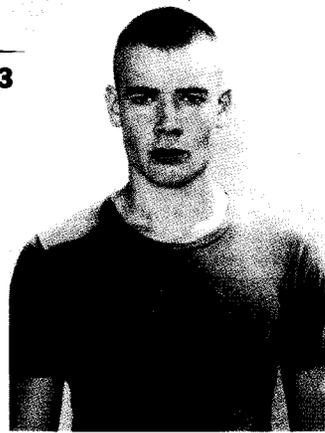
**Katy Grannan,**  
"Sugar Camp Road"  
Artemis Greenberg Van Doren,  
through Oct 11.  
(see 57th Street area).

**Katy Grannan, "Morning Call"**  
Salon 94, through Oct 29  
(see Uptown).

pictures are set outdoors, in public places, by lakes or in wooded parks.

The trouble with Grannan's work reveals itself in the first room of the color show, with a portrait of an unprepossessing naked man identified as "Robert," who has fallen back on his haunches against the chain-link fence enclosing an untended field. His clothes lie bunched in the weeds. His eyes are fixed on his prominent erection. It is impossible to know what part Grannan played in this faintly embarrassing scene—if she instigated the man's excitement or if he was taunting her and she let him. It is not a sexy picture. Owing partly to its sense of trespass, it actually seems dirty, and more than a little sad.

Grannan has also photographed Russian soldiers for *The New York Times Magazine*, while Dijkstra, best known for her sensitive, full-length portraits of teens by the sea,



is now forging her own brand of military portraiture.

Dijkstra's real subject is the nature of the individual within a collective body, here personified by Olivier Silva, a young man she has been photographing at regular intervals since he volunteered for the French Foreign Legion three years ago, at the age of 17. Using a documentary, almost scientific approach, Dijkstra chronicles his maturation in a set of seven, subtly emotive pictures. It gradually becomes clear that the longer he stays in uniform, the more appealing and self-possessed he gets. The opposite is true for Dijkstra's other recent subject, Shany, a young woman who deserts from mandatory military service in the Israeli army. In uniform, she is disheveled and awkward, but the more time she puts between herself and the army, the more sensual and confident she becomes. Without a hint of didacticism, Dijkstra illustrates the disparate effects of regimentation on men and women with real punch.

Few of Grannan's subjects possess the natural beauty of Dijkstra's soldiers. More striking—and problematic—is their apparent lack of self-awareness. A woman with her name, Kamika, tattooed on her thigh, sits by the side of a road in an orange knit bikini like a hooker who has lost her way. If asked, Grannan will tell you that Kamika is a cancer survivor who was anxious to show how well she was doing, but you can't really tell that from the picture. You only wonder what she might have been thinking, and where Grannan's sympathies lie.

Dijkstra's portraits are easier to take, but is that because they are less complex and more classically appealing than Grannan's inadvertent grotesques, or is it because Dijkstra, though no less a voyeur, has a simpler relationship to her subjects? Either way, it's a tantalizing question to ponder. ■



**Katy Grannan, Kamika, near Route 9, Poughkeepsie, NY, 2003. Above right, Rineke Dijkstra, Olivier, Camp Général de Gaulle, Libreville, Gabon, June 2, 2002.**

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