

Artist in the spotlight

MARIE CECILE THIJS: A SENSE OF WONDER

This is an exclusive interview with Marie Cecile Thijs by SmithDavidson Gallery.



Marie Cecile Thijs, *Magnolia..*

Photographer Marie Cecile Thijs has received international acclaim for her surrealist images. In her works, the unusual is usual. With contrasts of light and dark, Marie Cecile Thijs shows us fantastical still-lives from her imagined reality, a fusion between abstract and figurative elements.

During her youth she was already art minded, following art classes and practicing with drawing, sculpturing and photography.

“My earliest memories of photography go back to when I was eleven years old,” Marie Cecile Thijs recalled, “I started with the 6x6 camera of my father, walking around in the streets while making photographs. I developed them myself in an improvised Doka at home.”

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without any need to add any oddity.
You just have to see it.”*



Selfportrait of Marie Cecile Thijs (2018).



Marie Cecile Thijs, *Girl in Kimono*.

Staged Photography

She has created multiple series including *Horses*, *White Collar*, *Amazones*, *Majestic*, and *Food Portraits*. While there is a wide variety of subjects, her work always has a sense of mystery. “An illusion of a parallel world,” Marie Cecile Thijs commented, “A sort of timelessness as well. It just happens when I create a scenery, and it even happens when I make photographs on the street. It is also a matter of momentum. The moment I capture with my camera passes away directly, but with my camera I can keep it in a way I want. I am very aware of that, so that is a quite nostalgic approach too.”

Her series are never-ending, constantly expanding and growing. Preparing a series can take a long time, but when she has already started, the “flow” goes faster, inspiring her to create new themes or scenes.



Installation shot of her solo show at DOEN Rotterdam in collaboration with SmithDavidson Gallery (2025).

.In some of her series, like *Flowers*, *Birds & Vases*, and *Green Scenes*, there is a delicate balance between the surrealist or the magical and the natural. Though the photographs are meticulously staged and highly composed, they also feel incredibly spontaneous, as Marie Cecile Thijs places her subjects in an alternative world by bringing them to life unexpectedly, or, on the contrary, freezing them in time and space.

“[This balance] is a personal choice,” Marie Cecile Thijs explained, “I give nature a hand in order to give the scene I make some magic, while still keeping the feet on the ground. It is a feel of stretching the usual, just enough to keep the tension high. Although I must say, reality itself can be quite absurd without any need to add any oddity. You just have to see it.”

Alongside her free work, Marie Cecile is also a renowned portrait photographer, and her work has graced a multitude of book and magazine covers, depicting influential writers, cooks, politicians, designers and other artists.



Marie Cecile Thijs, *Romanesco*.

Artist of the Year 2024

Her photographs have been exhibited internationally at esteemed institutions, such as the show *The Animal in Photography* at the Museum of Photographic Arts in San Diego (2016) *Cat Love, Nine lives in the Arts* at Kunsthal Rotterdam (2017), and the solo show *Tussen Hemel en Aarde* at Museum Jan Cunen in the Netherlands (2018). During the summer 2025, SmithDavidson Gallery collaborated with the Oude Kerk in Delft to present another solo show called *In the Light of Creation*, and in October 2025, her work was also be on display in the exhibition *'Unicorn: The Mythical Beast in Art* at the Museum Barberini Potsdam and the Musée de Cluny in Paris.



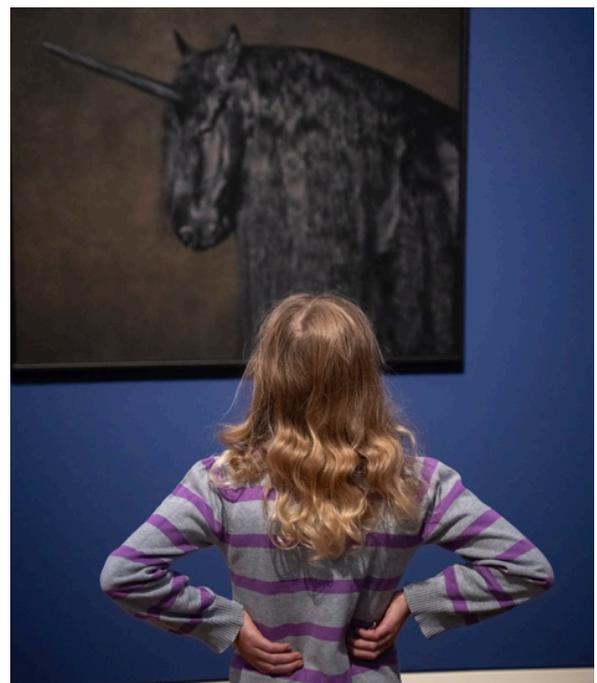
Marie Cecile Thijs, *Dandelion Rose*.

Named Artist of the Year 2024 by KunstWeek Foundation, her work has been included in public and private art collections worldwide, such as of the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam and the Museum of Photographic Arts San Diego. “When a work flies out in the world, it goes its own way,” Marie Cecile Thijs said, “It is nice to experience that people appreciate what you are doing in the studio. Because there it all begins, just with an idea and hard work.”



Marie Cecile Thijs, *Girl in Golden Coat*.

SmithDavidson Gallery has been the official gallery representing Marie Cecile Thijs' work for more than 10 years, exhibiting her photographs at numerous shows and art fairs, including TEFAF Maastricht, PAN Amsterdam, Zona Maco, Photo Basel, and Art Miami. “Working with SmithDavidson is an energetic cooperation, with a dedicated team, making it possible to showcase my works on art fairs. We can also have a good laugh together, and that is important too! So, you can say time flies when you are having fun,” the photographer reflected.



Installation shot of her work at Barberini Museum exhibition (2025).