



Rineke Dijkstra Reveals the Artifice of Photography Itself

The artist's portraits are riddled with metaphors yet recognisably human

BY JENNIFER HIGGIE IN REVIEWS | 03 MAR 98

Is there anyone who, in their childhood, wasn't told not to stare by an embarrassed parent? It's the kind of telling-off that still resonates deep into adulthood.

The portrait is an art of surface predicated on a paradox - that the rendering of someone's features will somehow ultimately reveal more than just their outward appearance.

Perhaps it's to do with the scale of the images, which are large and impossible to overlook, and her palette, which is almost as subtle and perfect as her 17th- and 18th-century precursors.

Adolescence, that terrible transitional time, is emphasised by the isolation, the semi-nudity, by the literally shifting ground these young people stand on, between the earth, the sea and the sky.



Dijkstra's portraits of three young mothers (Julia, Saskia and Tecla, all 1994) holding their new born babies to their chests with absolute, exhausted tenderness, exemplifies the restraint and deceptive simplicity of her approach towards representing people whose lives have been touched by commonplace but monumental change.

I can't remember a show where the audience stood for so long in front of a series of images of ordinary people. The same can be said of Dijkstra's video in which she isolated teenagers against a white background in two night-clubs.

Dijkstra works hard to make photographs and videos that look effortless. At first it seems she has a real talent for finding interesting people, but then, given this much attention, anyone could look fascinating.



JENNIFER HIGGIE
Jennifer Higgie is a writer who lives in London. Her book The Mirror and the Palette - Rebellion, Revolution and Resilience: 500 Years of Women's Self-Portraits is published by Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

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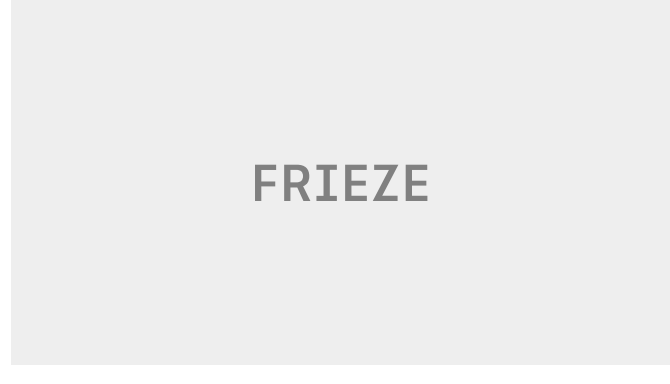
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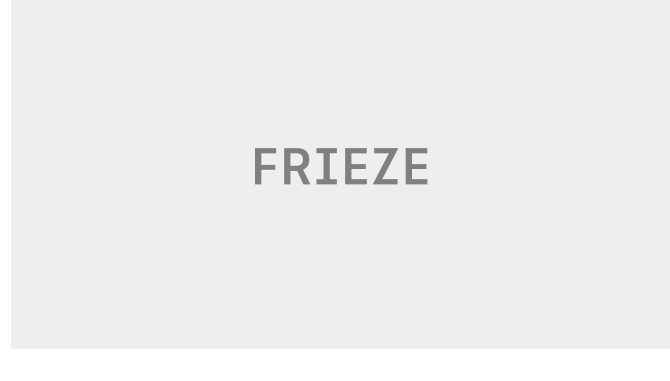
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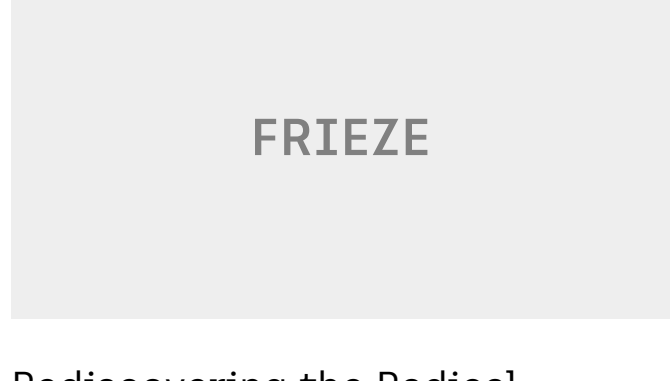
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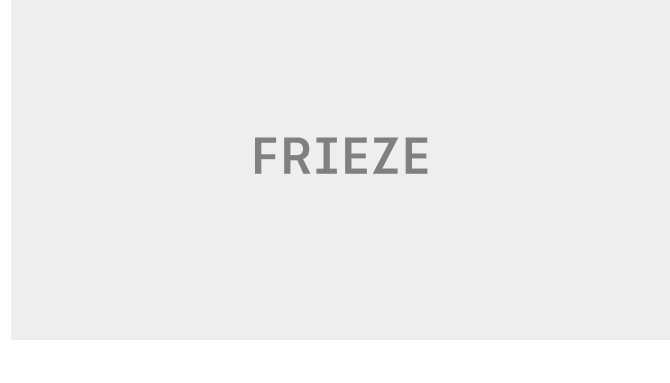
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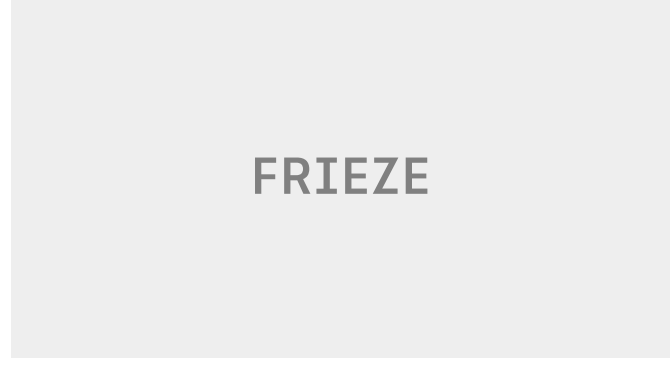
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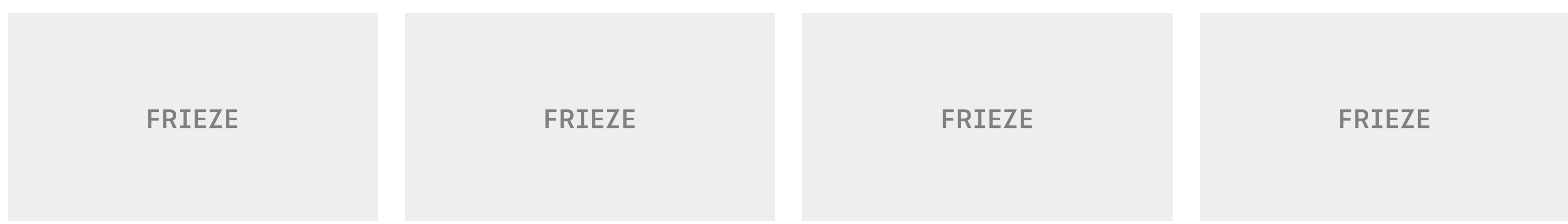


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