

JUSTINE TJALLINKS PASTPRESENT

A very special thank you to Alessia Glaviano, Roy Kahmann and Peter Witte for their commitment, loyalty, patience and support in my growth as an photographer, and be recognised, as an photographic artist.

## REASSERTING IDENTITY

Foreword by Alessia Glaviano

To present Justine Tjallinks' work is to reminisce on the moments of a precious friendship and a continued artistic exchange.

I recall first noticing Justine's work in *Photo Vogue* and immediately recognising its potential; her images commanded attention and would linger in my mind in a way that seldomly happens. They spoke of a rare sensitivity, a fierce determination and of an astonishing attention to detail which, in time, has become an often-shared process and an opportunity for both of us to grow and deepen our friendship.

Justine and I could spend days debating the shade of a dress collar or the most ideal position of a chair and each time it is a matter of pure joy to be able to share with her glimpses of the meticulous preparation that goes into crafting her images.

Her creative process is complex. Images are born in her mind, she "paints" them with her mind's brush, which are then translated as sketches on paper. Finally, these creative processes and ideas encounter the elements of reality that, perfectly composed and skilfully lit, result in pictorial, magnetic images that

command the gaze and don't release it that easily.

Of course, this is only one aspect of her work. The crucial feature is an artistic research capable of provoking an aesthetic and conceptual flash of insight.

But let's start with examining the light in Justine's photographs. A feel for lighting that is typical of Velázquez or the masters of the Dutch Golden Age such as Rembrandt and Vermeer is undeniably and immediately evident in her work. Echoing this use of the light so provokingly used by the leading portrait painters of the 17th century is miles away from being a coincidence or a purely aesthetic choice. Light, in this sense, was emphasising a corpus of portraits in which subtler psychological analysis was inextricably linked with power dynamics, starting from the relationship between light and the visible. It is as if, having travelled through history, that the light in Justine's images reached our contemporary lives by painting, and therefore, making visible some of their most decisive and political aspects.

Extremely powerful when approached individually, but as a series – be it *Surfaces*, *Nudes* or *Modern Type* – Justine's por-

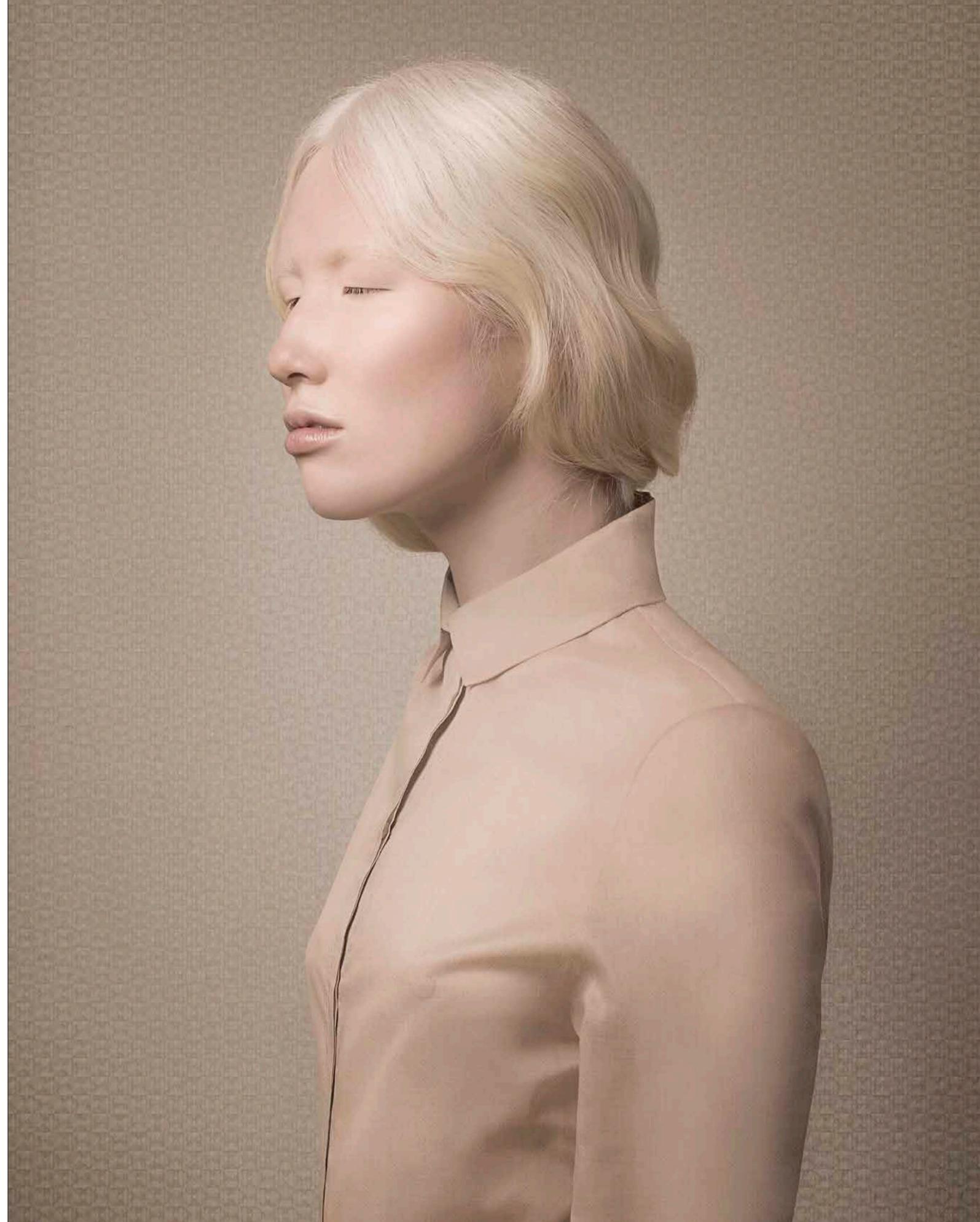
traits acquire added layers of meaning becoming a corpus that a shared source of light floods and permeates, establishing links with each other and extracting a viewing experience that can't anything but be considered as a group entity.

But what do these images extract if not what the traditional beauty criterion always excluded and dismissed and the normative criterion, of that normative anthropology that we all bear unthinkingly within ourselves, always erased or confined to the registry of 'diversity'? What do they offer if not the deeply political act of disrupting, and ultimately, changing the aesthetic standard of beauty?

By redefining the traditional criterion, not only do Justine's images succeed in unmasking its hypocrisy and fallacy, they are, effectively and visually, denouncing its contingency and transiency in order to hinge it onto a new foundation.

Through an act of absolute ennoblement and empowerment of her subjects, Justine comes to alter the power dynamics that in contemporary aesthetics always led to the removal of differences, diversity and the complex nature of

**Introspect**  
*Nude, 2014*



**Soldier's March**  
*The Outsiders*, 2014



Origin  
*Silk*, 2014



Metamorphosis  
*Silk*, 2014





Cocoon  
*Silk*, 2014

Bodil  
2014



### Adolescence

I love Asian skin. For these two portraits of Rachel and Charlene I wanted to create a very desaturated colour palette that would result in intense and moody images. What I love most about these girls is that they are both transitioning into womanhood. In both I see a young girl, but also the rising of a young woman. I find that phase, when physical and mental changes arise with adolescence, fascinating to capture on camera.

### Native

Throughout 2015, I primarily focused on improving my lighting and editing skills. I started working with fashion stylists, but also collaborated with young fashion designers and borrowed pieces from their collections to shoot with.

The jacket Tani is wearing was inspired on the indigenous people living in the Arctic. Tani was also featured in my series *Silk* (2014). I felt her unique facial characteristics added another layer to the intensity of these portraits.

### The Leftovers

As the subject of Down syndrome, and particularly Bodil, made a big impact on me and my work in 2014, I decided to portray more children with Down syndrome. The next two models are Isa and Jayda. Isa was nine years old at the time and Jayda eight. I thought *The Leftovers* it a suiting name, because now a year later statistics already showed less and less children are being born with the condition.

I love the stillness in both portraits. But there is also, in my opinion, an abrasive quality to them. I believe that is fitting when you think of the meaning behind the series.

It is not the easiest thing to photograph children, and it can be even more challenging when they have certain conditions, like in this case, Down syndrome. But I believe, with the right amount of patience and understanding about your subject, you can achieve a great deal in photography. When creating the right atmosphere on set, it didn't feel at all like I had to work hard in order to get the results I was hoping for beforehand. For me, it is so very essential to bond as best I can with the people I'm portraying.

Rachel  
*Adolescence*, 2015

