

Farah Al Qasimi

Lady Lady

January 15 – February 13, 2021

Artist Talk: Friday February, 12pm via Zoom ID: 850 2288 3730

COOPER COLE is pleased to present *Lady Lady*, a solo presentation of the work of Farah Al Qasimi. This is the artist's first exhibition at the gallery, and first solo exhibition in Canada.

In this body of photographic work, Al Qasimi explores themes of mimicry, commodification, and escape as they relate to photography and global aesthetics. Looking at both private and public spaces, Al Qasimi considers how popular culture has become a tool for world-building and the formation of value systems for young people in her respective communities.

The photographs in this exhibition zoom in on personal, often idiosyncratic, expressions of identity, culture, and personality through adornment and the assemblages of mass production, whether in teenage bedrooms or shopping malls. Al Qasimi interrogates the roles and uses of photography with careful skepticism, posing that today's visual fluency can often be too trusting of images (such as 'perfect' social media avatars and the inevitable subjectivity of mainstream news media). The artist does so by melding techniques of slick and enticing commercial photography, journalistic editorial photography, and fine art photography in a visual dialogue. Al Qasimi creates images that are luscious and inviting, while maintaining an opacity in their legibility. In doing so, she glitches the customary swiftness with which we are conditioned to consume images.

The title of the exhibition, *Lady Lady*, references an anime cartoon that was translated into Arabic and broadcasted in the Emirates in the 1990s. Imported fantasy worlds such as this one appear frequently in Al Qasimi's work. Her 2020 film *King of Joy* most directly addresses issues of identity and mimicry. In it, the artist appears dressed in a costume purchased from Dragon Mart—a Chinese mall in Dubai—improvising a musical piece and with it, a range of emotions. While this portrait appears to differ from her still, intimate photographs of women and their homes, throughout these works Al Qasimi reflects on the lived experience of transnationalism and the reality that our lives are never completely our own.

Farah Al Qasimi (b.1991, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates) received her MFA from the Yale School of Art and has participated in residencies at the Delfina Foundation, London and the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture, Maine. She is a recipient of the New York NADA Artadia Prize, the Aaron Siskind Individual Photographer's Fellowship, and the 2020 Capricious Photo Award.

Al Qasimi's work has been featured in exhibitions at Jameel Arts Centre, Dubai; the San Francisco Arts Commission, San Francisco; the CCS Bard Galleries at the Hessel Museum of Art, New York; Helena Anrather, New York; The Third Line, Dubai; The List Visual Arts Center at MIT, Cambridge; the Museum of Contemporary Art, Cooper Cole, Toronto; and the Houston Center for Photography, Houston. Her recent commission with Public Art Fund, *Back and Forth Disco*, was on view on 100 bus shelters around New York City in 2019 and 2020. Her work is in the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York; the Guggenheim Abu Dhabi, UAE; Tate Modern, London; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Cambridge; Huis Marseille, Museum for Photography, Amsterdam; Bowdoin College Museum of Art, Brunswick; and NYU's Grey Art Gallery, New York. Al Qasimi lives and works in Brooklyn, New York, USA and Dubai, United Arab Emirates.