

Frieke Janssens

A YouTube video of a chain smoking Indonesian toddler inspired me to create this series, "Smoking Kids". The video highlighted the cultural differences between the east and west, and questioned notions of smoking being a mainly adult activity.

Adult smokers are the societal norm, so I wanted to point the viewer's focus on the issue of smoking itself. I felt that seeing children smoke would have a surreal impact on the viewer and compel them to truly see the acts of smoking rather than making assumptions about the person doing it.

Coincidentally around the time of the first opening of "Smoking Kids", a law was passed that banned smoking from Belgian bars. There was an outcry from the public about government intervention, feelings that freedom was being oppressed, and that adults were being treated like children.

With health reasons driving many cities to ban smoking, the culture around smoking has a retro feel. It's like a throw back to the 'Mad Men' era when smoking on a plane or in a restaurant was not unusual. The aesthetics of smoke and the particular way smokers gesticulate with their hands and their posture cannot be denied, but among the different tribes of "Smoking Kids," - Glamour, Jazz, and The Marginal - there is a nod to less attractive aspects, balancing the line between the beauty and ugliness of smoking.

To assure you of the safety of the children, there were no real cigarettes on set. Instead, chalk and sticks of cheese were used as props, while candles and incense provided the wisps of smoke.

<http://www.facebook.com/friekejanssensphotography>
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Frieke Janssens was born in Bruges, Belgium, in 1980. After starting with evening classes in photography at an age of 15, she skipped the pilot or police on a horse option. Photography was her future.

While studying photography at Sint-Lukas Brussels she was mainly interested in lifestyle, sociology and stereotypes, because she felt like she was living in two worlds.

After graduating in 2002, Frieke immediately started with commissioned work, where she tries to tell a story that's fascinating and mostly avoids the clichés, or use them very consciously. She's inspired by different things from paintings, comics or even a real estate website, and works with an eye for detail, humor and surrealism. Her pictures are how she imagines subjects in her head.

Frieke loves the variety of working for cultural clients (FC Bergman, TAZ, ...), editorial clients (DSM, Goedele, ...), big clients (Renault, Nestea, ...), smaller clients (Gaia, De Morgen, ...) & last but not least her personal work. From working alone to a big team back to lonesome.