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GOOD GIRLS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY MAYA GODED



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New York, New York—A young artist in search of answers to the secrets and meanings enclosed within women’s bodies—issues of inequality, transgression, religion, virginity, maternity, age, and desire—sets out alone to find the truth. Her wanderings took her into the heart of downtown Mexico City, the dark alleyways behind the National Palace, in a quarter called La Merced. Life in the tenements (vecindades) and hotels, trade, the close contact with thieves and homeless children, drug-trafficking, apart from the religious devotion manifest in its temples and churches, define the character of this neighborhood that, for more than four centuries, has been a privileged space for prostitution. That was the door which allowed her to see how it was like—the world that authorities and society in general prefer not to mention, or which they classify as an underworld of violence and “lost” women, the bad ones, society’s dark side; that world we all are a part of, whether we want to—whether we care—or not. We see the face of the Magdalen in these fleshy, soulful, life-filled, lusty pictures and in the fascinating interviews that accompany them.

A traveling exhibition accompanies this book, opening in Paris, Miami, and Mexico City.

MAYA GODED Born in Mexico City, Maya Goded has had her work exhibited in numerous venues including the Arte Contemporáneo de Monterrey Museum in Mexico; the European Festival for the Arts, Brussels; Rotterdam Museum of Art; The Women’s Museum of Denmark; Foto Fest, Houston, Texas; and the Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia in Madrid, Spain.

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“I grew up in Mexico City, where Christian morals decree what a “good girl” should be, making a myth of maternity and virginity, as if our bodies determined what we’re worth as persons and, in the end, our destinies.”

—Maya Goded

“Behind every great man there’s a great woman, that’s true, but also, behind a great woman there’s a man that exploits her, that’s all.” —Pimp, 45 years old

“Well, prostitution made me feel desired as a woman. Besides, it made me feel I could give my children a good start in life, and to myself as well. The other satisfaction is the life I lead with Carlos now, which is something very important to me, because perhaps if I hadn’t been here I wouldn’t have even met him.”

—Carmen, a prostitute, 43 years old

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“A Spanish journalist, Pepa Roma, told me once when she saw my pictures: ‘The women in your photographs seem to give back to the woman looking at them, from the other side, the image she doesn’t dare to look at in herself.’ ” —Maya Goded

“I was two months pregnant, and then he brought me back to the same hotel where he kept his women and they began to train me: they taught me how I should treat a client, how I should move, the poses to take...that if I was to take my top off, I should charge more, and if I got undressed I should charge for it. They taught me how to clean myself perfectly, how to wash myself. They had a hard time with me because I was embarrassed, ashamed. When he saw that I couldn’t do it he got mad at me and said, ‘You have to learn. What do you think I brought you here for?’ I didn’t want to see him upset because I thought he might take me back home. I thought they wouldn’t take me back over there.” —Evelia, 43 years old

