

EXHIBITION

NAKED AMBITION

Text: EDMUND LEE

**CURVES OF MOON
AND RIVERS OF BLUE**
Blindspot Gallery

THERE'S A GOOD chance that you've seen the works of Nadav Kander on magazine covers before. Over the years, the London-based photographer has made a name for himself with a range of sometimes haunting, often dramatic portraits of culturally significant figures, from Brad Pitt and David Lynch to Prince Charles and Barack Obama.

Kander calls the "beautiful images of difficult subjects" his "chocolate cakes with mustard". "I've always liked things that look one way but have a little sense of somebody sticking their fingers in your ribs a bit – just to annoy you," he says.

None of those commercial portraits, naturally, are on view at "Curves of Moon and Rivers of Blue" at Blindspot Gallery, which marks his first solo exhibition in Hong Kong. But while Kander makes a clear distinction between his commissioned works and those in fine art photography, he is also eager to point out the connection – be it tonal or stylistic – that runs through his practice.

"I was very influenced as a teenager by Edward Weston and all the genres that he did," Kander explains. "I think the biggest influence he's had on me is to make work that shows a thread that very clearly goes through different works made by one person."

At his current show, the photographer is presenting two of his most recognised series, *Yangtze*, *The*

NUDES AND VIEWS: *Audrey With Toes and Wrist Bent* (2011); *Chongqing VI (Sunday Picnic)* (2006); *Chongqing XI, Chongqing Municipality* (2007). Photos courtesy Nadav Kander and Blindspot Gallery



Long River (2006-2008) and *Bodies. 6 Women 1 Man* (2010-2014), which are being exhibited together for the first time. Although Kander admits that it'll be hard for the audience to look at the landscapes and nude portraits and "imagine the same person did them", he insists a shared essence of authenticity is there.

"They may look very different, but I feel that emotionally they're pretty similar," says Kander. "I feel that if I moved very close to these people [in the Yangtze photographs] and took off

their trousers and worked with them, I would have what I have [for the *Bodies* series]. I feel that mankind is very connected. We're connected in our common conditions – and that's what I realised in China."

Kander recalls that he had always wanted to work on nudes since the early days, but the interest was curbed by the overt sexual aspect of the form, which he had found hard to avoid.

"With this, I started to realise that by painting people white, they started to look like sculptures," he says.



"I was also very taken by Renaissance art – and that's kind of where I'm going with this series.

"When I look at human beings en masse, there's a 'lostness' as to what our purpose is and where we're going. These nudes, for me, are just that [feeling] distilled," he says.

Blindspot Gallery, 15/F, Po Chai Industrial Building, 28 Wong Chuk Hang Road, Wong Chuk Hang, Tuesday-Saturday, 10.30am-6.30pm. Ends July 19. Inquiries: 2517 6238

THEATRE

IN UNCERTAIN TERMS

Text: ROBIN LYNAM

DOUBT: A PARABLE

Sweet and Sour Productions

THERE ARE NO easy answers in John Patrick Shanley's Pulitzer Prize-winning play *Doubt: A Parable*. In fact, there are no answers at all. The play, set in St Nicholas Catholic church and school in the Bronx, New York, in 1964, is concerned with the topical issue of clerical child abuse and the larger theme of managing uncertainty, says director Candice Moore.

"You think you're going to get an answer to a certain issue or a character's dilemma, and then you don't," Moore says. "It leaves you hanging. Just as you think you're about to find something out, off you go in a different direction."

Doubt, first performed off-Broadway in 2004, went on to become a Broadway hit, and eventually a film starring Meryl Streep and the late Philip Seymour Hoffman. This production by Sweet and Sour Productions is its Hong Kong premiere.

The play has only four characters. Rob Archibald plays Father Brendan Flynn, a likeable progressive parish priest. Vickie Rummun plays Sister Aloysius Beauvier, the school's principal and a conservative disciplinarian who dislikes the priest.

Heather Cooper plays Sister James, an impressionable young nun who believes Father Flynn may be guilty of sexual misconduct with a black student called Donald Muller, and Alexandra Jacobs plays the boy's mother.

The crux of the play is the question of Father Flynn's guilt or



WOMAN OF THE CLOTH: Heather Cooper plays the role of Sister James in Sweet and Sour's production of *Doubt: A Parable*.

innocence, which Shanley leaves unresolved, with strong arguments presented for both. The audience members are asked either to make up their own minds or to come to terms with uncertainty about the truth.

Shanley contends that one of life's challenges is living with necessary honest doubt. In the words of the sermon by Father Flynn which opens the play: "Doubt can be a bond as powerful and sustaining as certainty." This view is anathema to Sister Aloysius who is convinced of the priest's guilt and seeks to have him removed from the school.

"It's a good cast, and I think it's

relevant and timely," says Moore, adding that the players are all either teachers or underwent Catholic schooling, which gives them special insight into the play's issues. "We've all got different opinions, which I like. I think that helps the characters. We're thinking of having a post-show discussion to see what the audience thinks."

HKRep Blackbox Theatre, Sheung Wan Civic Centre, 345 Queen's Road Central, May 29-31, 8pm, May 31-June 1, 3pm. HK\$280 Urbtix. Inquiries: 9131 3387