

THE WALLS ART SPACE

KIMBERLY STOKES

PUNCTURE TO THE WIND

5 - 20 SEPTEMBER, 2020

[Clockwise from entrance]

AN EXERCISE IN RELEASE #1 - 10 [2020]

Photographic print

841 x 1189 mm

[Mezzanine Studio]

WHAT IS A SPIRIT? [2020]

Single-channel HD video

2min 40sec

INNER BEING #1 - 8 [2020]

Photographic print

210 x 297mm

KIMBERLY STOKES is a Gold-Coast based artist who examines the effects of digital culture on perceptions of self. Her work addresses the conventions of social networking sites, and how these facilitate the continuous fragmentation, adaptation and dissemination of identity. Employing a conceptual approach to art making, STOKES works in an array of mediums, including still and moving images, installation and performance. Through her practice, she confronts the prevailing collapse of the borders between virtual and physical realities, and explores the potential impacts this can have on an individual's sense of self.

Captivated by the seemingly inescapable world of digital culture, KIMBERLY STOKES constructs images that examine the photographic medium's complex relationship with self-representation. By pushing against the traditional representational limits of an image, STOKES' exhibition PUNCTURE TO THE WIND provides curious observations on what we expect to 'see' during the photographic experience and what else that could entail. By extending on the Ancient Greek word Pneuma meaning spirit or wind, STOKES' work attempts to puncture and release one's inner spirit contained within the photograph. Her soft, minimalist colour-scapes seep into the soul with pastel shades that shift and bleed together. By using a gaussian blur effect on 'selfie' style images, what is formed are tantalising compositions that compel the viewer to search the surface for narrative answers which remain elusive.

Taking a non-representational approach to portraiture, STOKES touches on theorist Roland Barthes', idea of the 'referent'—what an image represents. She sees how far she can push 'our' expectation of the photographic image into abstraction until it can no longer reference what it originally depicted.

STOKES considers the image's indexical relation to what's before it's lens at the moment of exposure. She highlights that we seldom consider the subject captured as being permanently stuck in the past every moment following its capture. Coupled with this notion is our awareness of the 'spectacle' and shareability of images on digital platforms. We feel observed by the lens, potentially even more so when our phone screens are flipped to reflect back to us what is being taken. We respond, react and

pose accordingly. Though despite this subliminal awareness, as a society we expect a photograph to reveal its relationship to its origin and a sense of truth. And so, the question lulls at the forefront of KIM'S exhibition: can the lens be a witness to the true self and one's inner spirit?

Touching on the awe-inspiring sublime, STOKES' images generate anticipation within the viewer fostered by the immediacy of digital culture that we have come to expect. Each blurred portrait suggests that maybe the picture will eventually 'load' to focus on something clearer than what is originally seen, something greater than physical representation. The viewer is subsequently drawn into the image, yet the diffused tonality of the photograph prevents our eye from getting a secure hold on the depicted figure. The resulting experience is a slow push-pull between image and viewer.

As the viewer stands in front of these works, their eyes seek an entry point to the blurred compositions. Their matte surfaces absorb light and seem to absorb us as well, seeking us to find more beyond their surface and beyond their subjects' initial physical representation.

— TAYLOR HALL, 2020



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THE WALLS acknowledge the YUGAMBEH people, the traditional owners of the land on which we operate, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait

Islander Peoples on the Gold Coast today.