

SHAUN WILSON | WINTER ORBIT

Light Fades

In May 2020, my aunt Molly died from COVID-19 as one of the many who have succumbed from an evil and unrelenting illness. Yet the issue for me as an artist is how can I respond to this crisis with any sort of meaningful reply that is, on the one hand, intelligent enough to summarise the crisis while on the other, quietly surmount an emotional linkage which places this response into a conceptual framework akin to a metamodernist enquiry?

My fallback was to retreat from my recent narrative filmmaking epoch and return to my roots of fine arts to frame the new images back into the 51 Paintings Suite project which, since 2006, has positioned models of my lens into poses located in German medieval paintings to recontextualise and reconfigure new spaces both in terms of a 'memory' of the former within frame and invite questions as to the meta-validity of memory versus the post-sustainability of simulacra.

On this point, it occurred to me that the entire time I have referenced these source paintings - many of which are located in the 1000 year old St Michael's Church in Schwabisch Hall, Germany where I visited in late 2006 - the origins of these works are numerously located from the Black Plague pandemic and moreso, that a glass floor concealed behind the altar reveals carefully stacked rows of thousands of perfectly ordered skeletons from those who perished during that era of pandemic. It then made sense that the entire time over the past fourteen years I have made art pointing back to these paintings was, as oblivious to me until now, conceptually manufactured from art echoing the Black Plague; from this, a response to not only Molly's death but the pandemic as an entirety became aligned to my ongoing practice, congealed through what was to become Winter Orbit, the fourth instalment of the 51 Paintings Suite pentalogy and its subsequent companion works represented in this catalogue.

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It comes as no surprise that these photographic images bring with them an ambiguity surmounted by suggestion whereby the commonality of the current pandemic manifests in the notions of fear, anxiety, and restriction, clearly visible in plague artworks yet not necessarily noticeable as a collective consciousness otherwise found in a pre-COVID-19 context. Yet through the eyes of 2020, and especially in Australia where our lead into the pandemic was subjected to the most catastrophic bushfires in recorded history, the weariness of our communities, now fractured through a division of those who comply with social distancing and those who do not, echoes the exact sentiments of our last pandemic 100 years ago which suffered the same fate from the onslaught of biological-genocide and the protesting stupidity of hedonism.

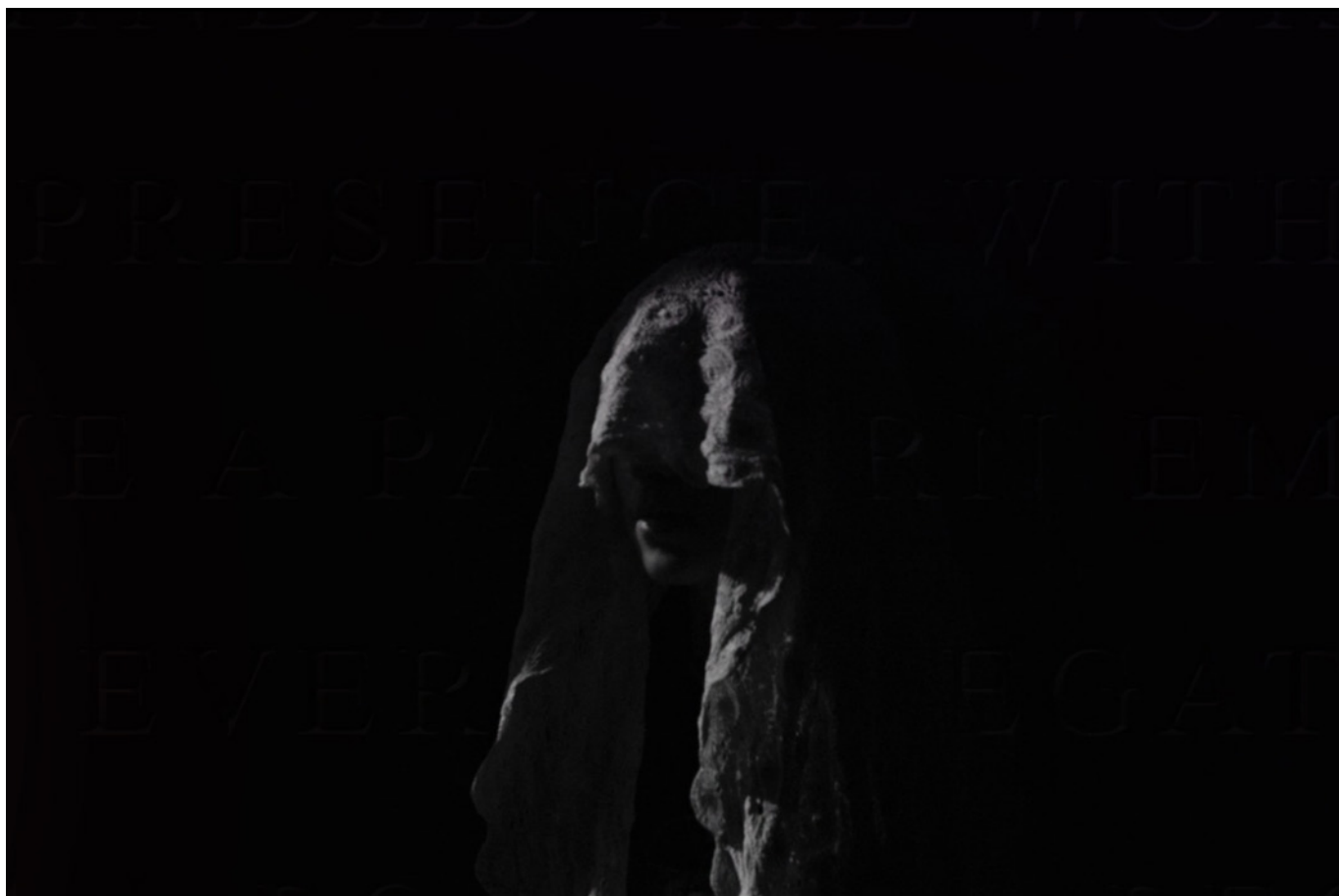
The images speak to the weight of the pandemic, as something out of our immediate control notwithstanding to our realisation that the best and worst of humanity brings forth an oscillation between responsibility and recklessness congealed through the same kinds of issues that affect the image as a facsimile of someone else. Yet these images intentionally reveal little, if not hardly anything at all, by the metaphor of absence just as the virus itself reveals as much through its invisible migration from transmission to activation.

To represent this through the guise of narrative images would speak as an unnecessary gratuitous voyeurism now absent from my work for many years so much so that anything other than a transfixation of subtlety would corrupt the conceptuality of my work in ways that bring forth a rupture to authenticity through the guise of a modernist affixation.

*I am reminded of Caravaggio's *The Denial of St Peter* (1610) painted in his last months which uncharacteristically reveals only brushy fragments of his subject. What impresses me about this work is the figure in the centre background who, with only the glimpse of his brow and forehead embellish the negative space around him to suggest that the rest of his corporeality must be lurking in the shadows much like what Hitchcock constructs as a narrational moment which is about to happen or inadvertently, and precariously, has just occurred. The same could be said of Goya's *Black Paintings* from his redecoration period, most of which began exactly 200 years ago where one in particular, *The Witches Sabbath (The Great He-Goat)* (1820-23) follows in the same minimalistic exploration of *Winter Orbit* as a kind of regressionary foxy, construant in opposition to the arguably oppressive nature of uber-figuration and populous visual oligarchies.*

*As a guiding point by which *Winter Orbit* embellishes an allegorical demarcation of sorts, the surmounting resonance within the artworks bring a transference to the subject I now consider to be weighted down from a meta-aesthetic to hold a condition for the image that would not be possible without the wider, almost inconceivable gigo-scale of the pandemic's affect. It is my hope that these images be reconsidered in times to come when COVID-19 will surely be forgotten and hope for the future undoubtedly prevailed.*

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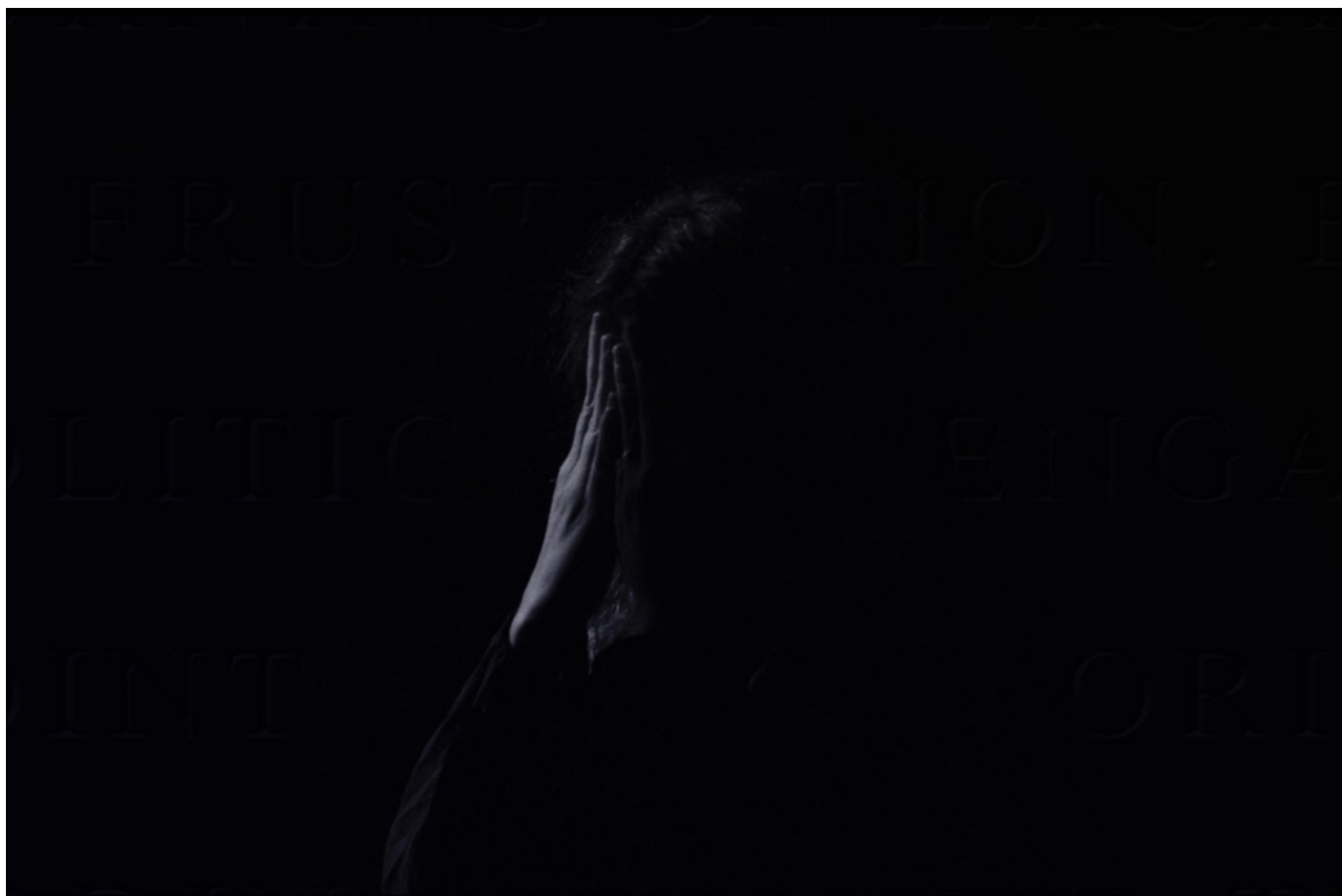


Winter Orbit 1
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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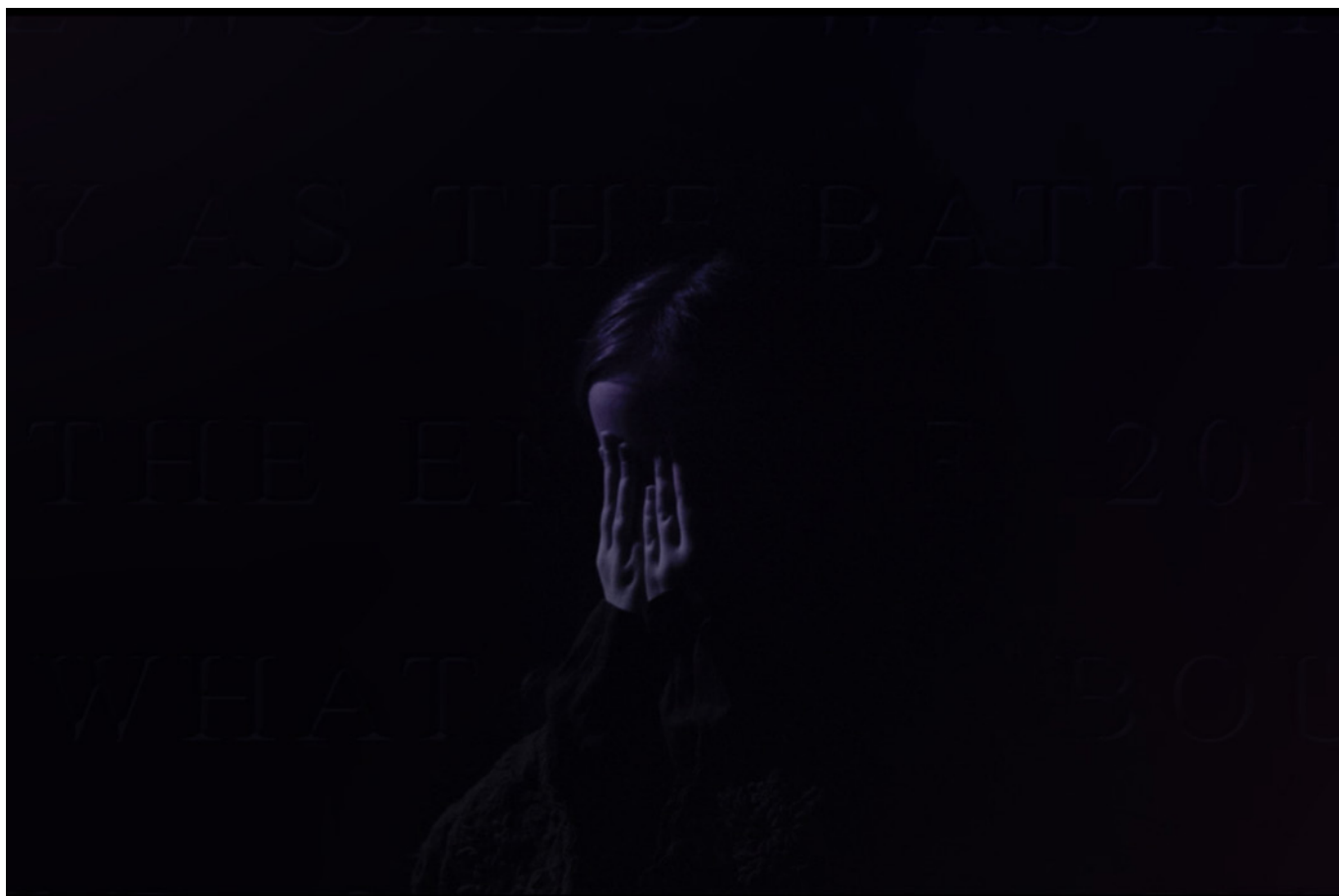


Winter Orbit 2
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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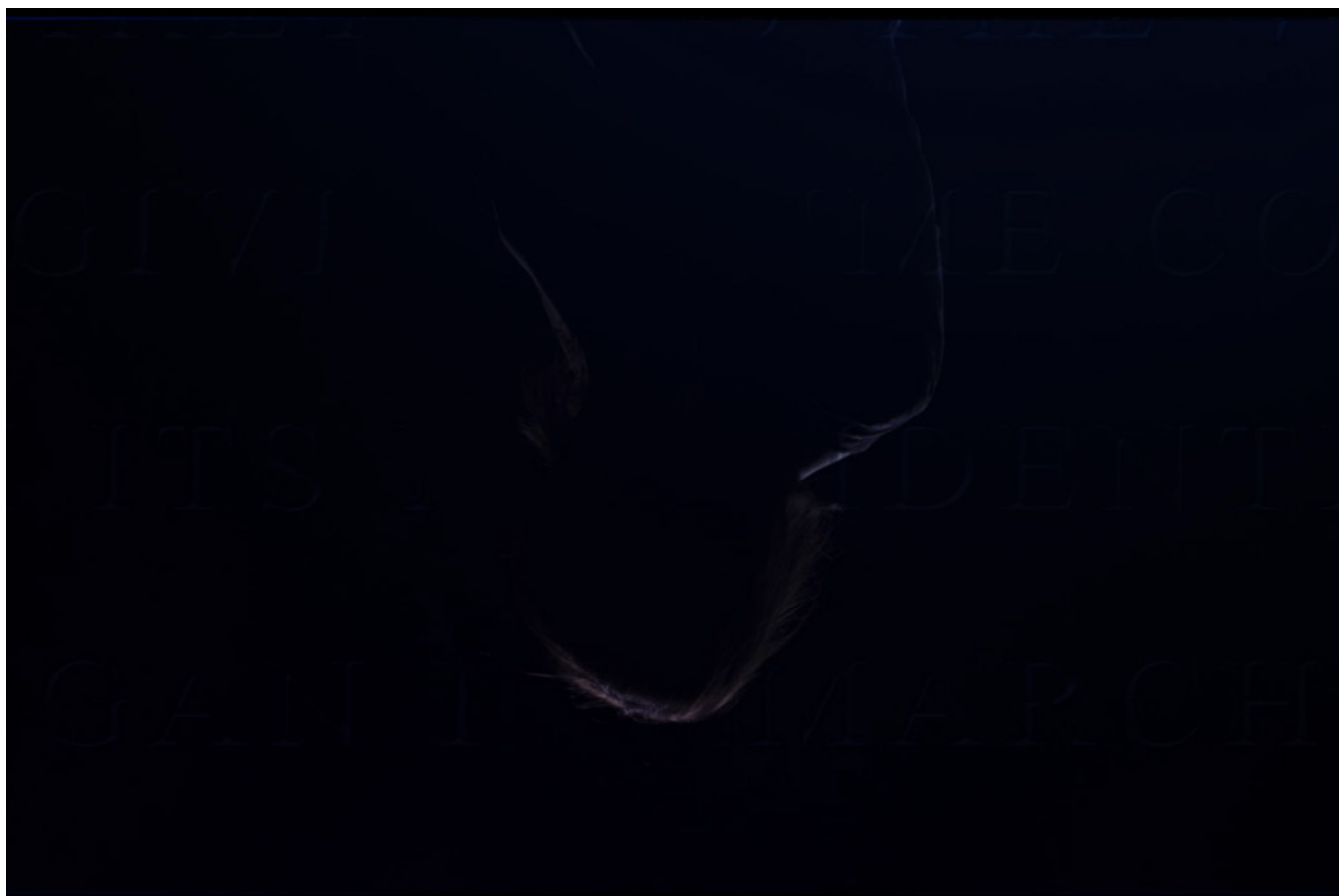


Winter Orbit 3
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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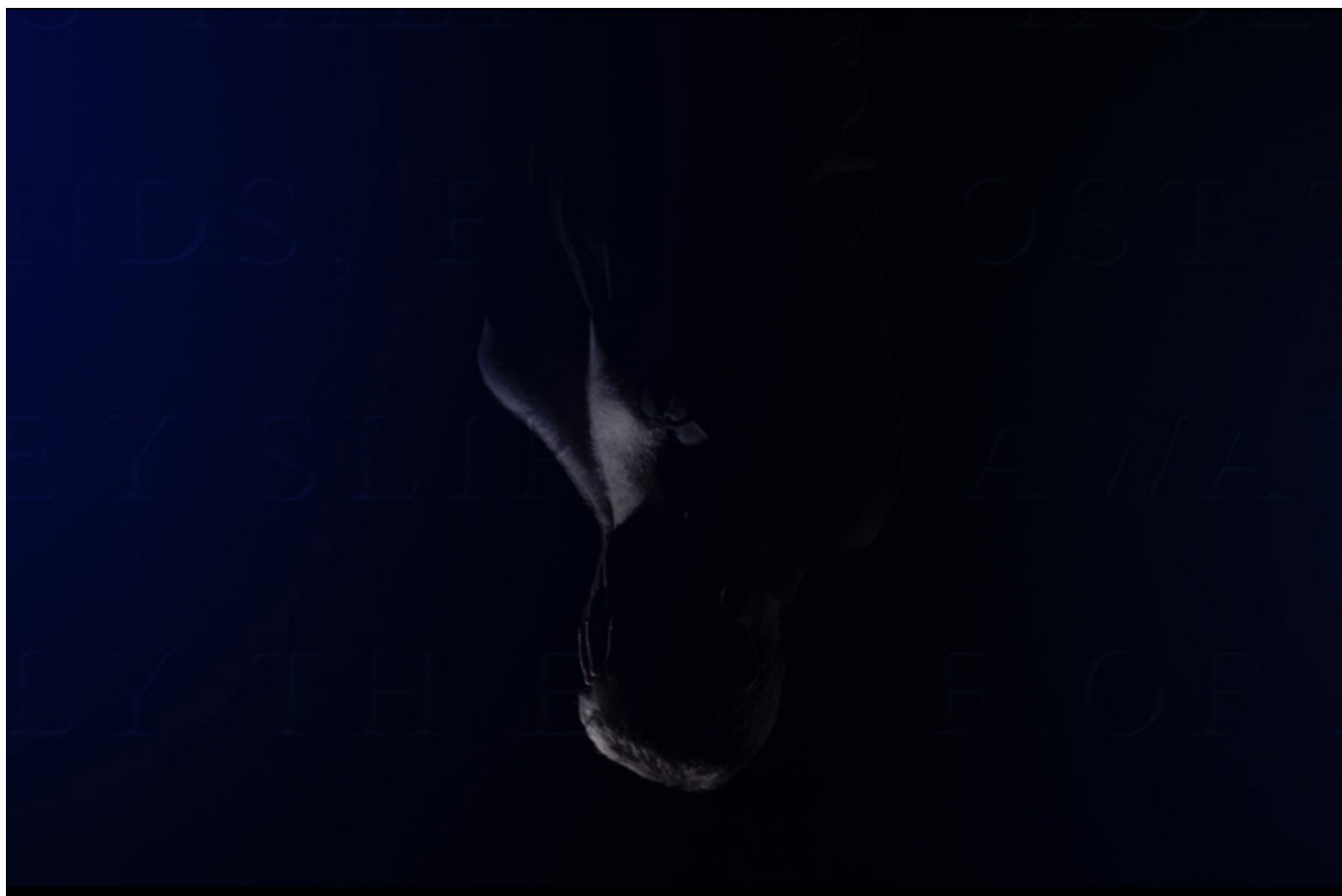


Winter Orbit 4
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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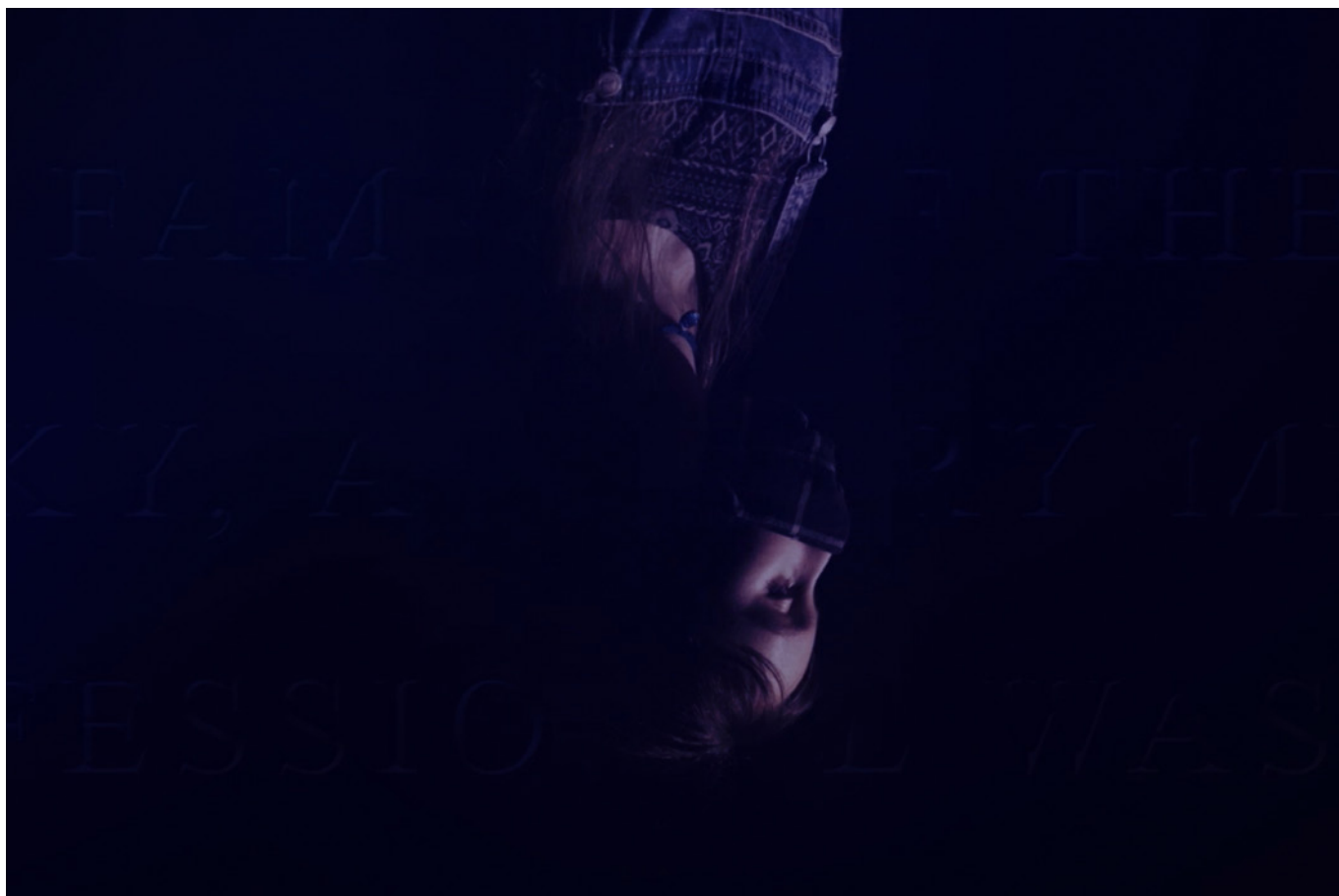


Winter Orbit 5
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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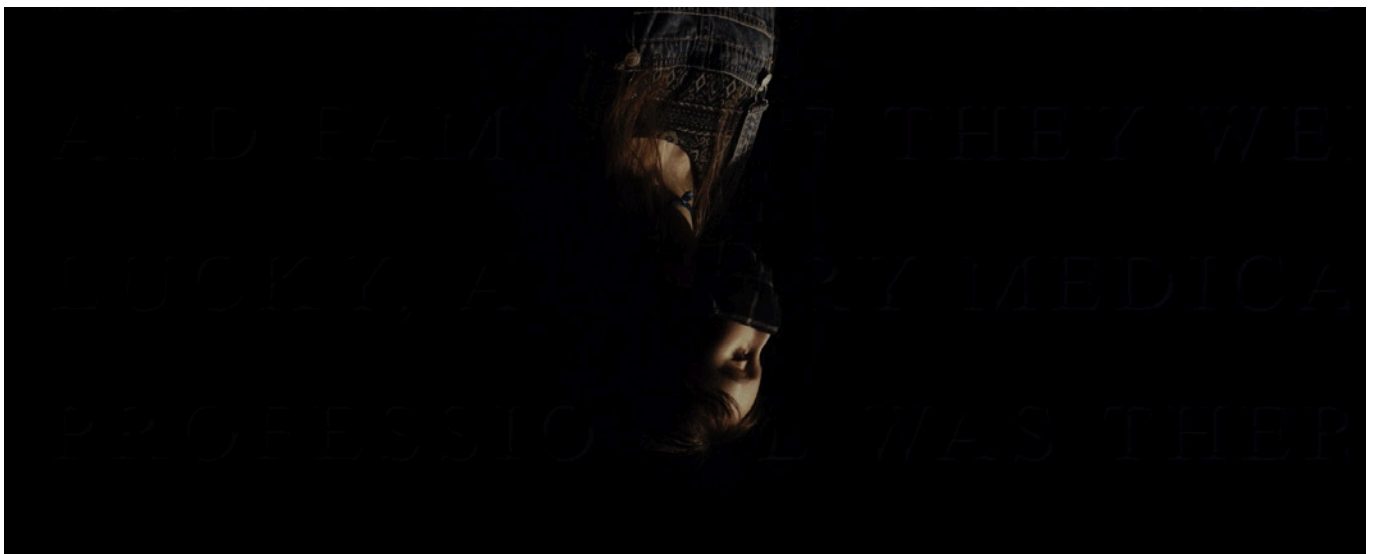


Winter Orbit 6
2020
inkjet on platine

100 x 150 cm
Unique Edition

60 x 90 cm
edition of 10 + 1 A/P
Edition 1 available

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Winter Orbit
2020
UHD video, 60:00 mins
Text: Pearl Wilson
Score: Shinjuku Thief

The artist would like to thank Pearl Wilson for the text and Shinjuku Thief for the score featured in the video, Tammy Honey, Isabella Honey Wilson and Sophia Honey Wilson, featured models, Li Ping Thong and Laurene Vaughan at and the School of Design at RMIT University, Venice Production Bridge and the Venice Film Festival, Venice Biennale Historical Archives, and MARS Gallery for their grateful assistance.

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