

MARIA KONTIS

It was an extraordinary summer

13 June – 18 July 2020



When I look at an old photo I'm seeing something I could never have seen. Something from a faraway place and from another time. But even if I was there I couldn't see what the camera sees. The camera sees something that the human eye doesn't. It opens up a vision that's non-human – a vision that's machinic. And when I draw from the photo, as I vary, modify and transform the photo, maybe I'm seeing something the camera doesn't see?

The drawings are so simple but I find myself working with the technique of drawing and the technology of photography in some unexpected and unforeseen way. They're just specks of pastel on paper but they rely on early cameras, the cameras in our contemporary computers and magnifying lenses. Photographs become my assistant and my drawings are accomplices in the act of photography - a mutual becoming.

Most of the photos I worked with for this exhibition were bought on eBay. There are hundreds of thousands of old family snapshots for sale on eBay. The photos have travelled here from all over the world, France, Iceland, Portugal, America. They're uprooted. No one knows anything about them anymore. They've outlived their photographers and they've outlived their subjects. So there's no 'true' story anyone can tell us about the people in these photos. And still I find myself searching for clues. Or hoping for an inscription on the back. I want to know something about the lives of the people in the photograph. Despite their lost status, there is something in these photos that remains real and doesn't consent to being art. Something real that resists. But the drawing of the photograph is something different. The photo as it appears in the drawing is different to the original snapshot. It's a fake photo. The drawings are a strange mix of deception and reality and, in a way, I make photography an accomplice in my work.

Maria Kontis

DARREN KNIGHT GALLERY

Maria Kontis was the Nancy Fairfax Artist in Residence at the Tweed Regional Gallery in 2019. Her residency was accompanied by a solo exhibition, *Oh life is mad and frenetic... but do look after yourself*, at the gallery in Murwillumbah, NSW. Recent group exhibitions include the *Adelaide Perry Prize for Drawing 2020 - Exhibition of Finalists*, Adelaide Perry Gallery, Sydney, *With a little help from our Friends*, Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery (2020), *The Hazelhurst Art on Paper Award 2019*, Sydney, Darren Knight Gallery at Sydney Contemporary, Carriageworks, Sydney (2018), Darren Knight Gallery at Spring 1883, Windsor Hotel, Melbourne (2018), *Let's Play: Let's Play: Art of our time*, Bunjil Place Gallery, Melbourne (2017) and *Close to Home: Dobell Australian Drawing Biennial 2016*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. In 2019 she was awarded *The Mission to Seafarers Victoria Annual ANL Maritime Art Award*, Mission to Seafarers, Docklands, Melbourne.

This is Maria Kontis's fourth exhibition with Darren Knight Gallery.