

# Gerwyn Davies

## *Strange Magic*

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24 February – 19 March 2022

"*Strange Magic* was prompted by an interest in the gaudy world of stage magic, its elaborate displays of smoke and mirrors, spectacular tricks of the eye and confounding sleights of hand. Between Houdini's flamboyant flights, hammy hat tricks and the surplus sequin of Siegfried and Roy, the performance of magic is camp incarnate - an aesthetic strategy that is at the heart of my art practice to date.

Under the ornate ether of the magic show, the magician's success hinges upon their ability to seduce an audience, to disguise, distract and divert their vision, to summon a sense of wonder while maintaining a delicate balance in which the mechanics of their illusions remain concealed. It is through this confusion of vision and the juggling of extravagance and evasion that the productions and desires of the magic show resonate with my own queer photographic practice.

Where the camera is conventionally claimed to possess a unique capacity for exposing and revealing something of the subject to its viewer, in *Strange Magic*, I perform acts of photographic disappearance. A theatrical routine of pixelated misdirection's, illusions, camouflage and distortions that enable a queer desire to elude identification and to pass before the camera un/seen.

My figure is concealed beneath elaborately wrought costumes that mutually entice and resist examination while the world inside the image is manicured to emit an implausible synthetic glow. At times, this ornamentation is extended to the photographic frame which becomes a colourful frosted screen that troubles the viewer's ability to see the subject beneath.

In *Strange Magic*, I conjure a set of vivid and varnished self-representations, strings concealed, I vanish before the camera's eye into a hall of smoke and mirrors." **Gerwyn Davies, 2022**

### ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Queensland and now residing in Sydney, Gerwyn Davies completed his PhD (2021) at the University of New South Wales Art and Design, where he also lectures in photography. In 2021, he was commissioned by Sydney Living Museums to create a body of work in response to several significant heritage sites that are under the Museums care, including Rose Seidler House, Hyde Park Barracks and Vaucluse House. The resulting exhibition 'Iridescent' features 12 large scale works and is currently on exhibition at Sydney Museum until 24 April 2022.

Gerwyn has exhibited extensively throughout Australia and internationally including exhibitions at the Australian Centre for Photography, UNSW Galleries, Singapore International Photography Festival and Brisbane Powerhouse. In 2021, he was awarded the Director's Choice Award - Olive Cotton Award for Photographic Portraiture at Tweed Regional Gallery. He is a five-time finalist in the Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award and has been a regular finalist in The Sunshine Coast Art Prize, the Alice Springs Art Prize, the Bowness Prize and Clayton Utz Prize since 2014.

His work is held in public collections including the Museum of Sydney, the Museum of Brisbane, Gold Coast City Gallery/HOTA, Redlands Art Gallery, Artbank and the Queensland Centre for Photography.