

# **PETRINA HICKS**

## **BLEACHED GOTHIC**

### **ARTWORK LABELS**

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Petrina Hicks is widely recognised for her refined, poetic and often surreal sensibility. Working with medium-format film, Hicks creates photographs that draw on a wide variety of literary, mythological and historical sources to explore questions of identity and psychology.

Children, animals and women are recurring subjects in Hicks's photographs, and she frequently returns to the same motifs and models, including Lauren, an ethereally beautiful woman with albinism, whom Hicks has photographed for over fifteen years. Her animal and human models sometimes act as ciphers or avatars for herself, as she plays with and disrupts symbols and imagery of 'the feminine'. Hicks's photographs are the result of months of research and refinement, as she works to remove all but the most essential elements from each frame.

Hicks's works can appear to be a celebration of the perfect; a vision of flawless bodies and clean backgrounds. This effect is created by Hicks's technically pristine lighting and painstaking attention to detail, which reflects her commitment to the purity and integrity of film photography. On closer viewing of her work, the blemishes and cracks in the images start to appear. Hicks draws us towards considering the barest of bodily marks – the fading bruise on the flesh, the slight wound on the skin, the tousled hair, the missing limb – as her seemingly faultless models occasionally show the signs of

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our inexorable transit towards decay. The tension between seduction and danger, familiarity and strangeness, and intimacy and distance are recurring themes in Hicks's work. Her practice embraces this ambiguity; it is both deeply evocative and achingly unknowable.

All works are from the collection of the artist, courtesy of Michael Reid, Sydney, and This Is No Fantasy, Melbourne, unless otherwise stated.

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# **Rosemary's baby**

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Lauren (eyes open)**

from the *Lauren* series 2003

2003, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

## For kids

This is Lauren, and she is the artist Petrina Hicks's muse. What's a muse? A muse is a person who inspires the artist to create art. Working with Lauren helps Petrina come up with new ideas for her photographs. She asks Lauren to wear different clothes and pose each time she photographs her. In each picture of Lauren, the artist captures a different idea or emotion.

How many times can you spot Lauren's face in the photographs on these walls?

# Lauren

from the *Lauren* series 2003

2003, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Lambswool

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print



**The unbearable lightness of being**  
from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* series 2015  
2015, printed 2019  
pigment inkjet print

# **Copper and brass III**

from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* series 2015

2015, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Persephone

from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* series 2015

2015, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **The beauty of history**

from the *Every Rose has its Thorn* series 2010

2010, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Shenae and Jade

from the *Untitled* series 2005

2005, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Shewolf I

from *The California Works* series 2016

2016, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Fertile

from the *Every Rose has its Thorn* series 2010

2010, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Into the abyss**

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print



# Melo melo

2019

pigment inkjet print

# Venus

from *The Shadows* series 2013

2013, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Hand that feeds

from the *The Shadows* series 2013

2013, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Cleopatra

2019

pigment inkjet print

# Excalibur

from the *Untitled* series 2006

2006, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Jordan I

from the *Untitled* series 2006

2006, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Minerva

from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* series 2015

2015, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Lauren with sunglasses no. II**

2019, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print



# **The Chrysalis**

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011  
2011

colour digital video, silent, 6 min

# **Peach study**

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018

2018, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Lauren in blue

from the *Untitled* series 2006

2006, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Silver bullets**

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018

2018, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Deb

from the *Untitled* series 2006

2006, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Bluebird

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018

2018, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Zara II

from the *Untitled* series 2005

2005, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Fragrant memory

from the *Every Rose has its Thorn* series 2010

2010, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print



# Comfort

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

## For kids

When you first look at them, Petrina Hicks's photographs seem simple and realistic. For example, this is a photograph of a young woman in a pink shirt, facing towards the camera. But the artist has made the image more complicated by covering the woman's face with white fur. The fur makes what first seems normal start to feel strange. This is why Hicks's artworks are often called 'surreal'. Rather than showing things as they are in real life, Hicks makes images that are magical and fantastical, like something you might imagine in a dream.

What is the strangest dream you have ever had?

# Eye candy

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Gloss

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011  
2011

colour digital video, silent, 3 min 19 sec

## For kids

Petrina Hicks likes to experiment with the idea of time. Think about when you have to sit very still. Does time seem to pass slowly? What about when you are playing with friends? Does time pass quickly? In this video, the artist has recorded a few seconds of film on a special camera that gives the effect of super-slow motion. What would have been a quick meeting between a woman and a butterfly is drawn out to several minutes. The slowness of the video makes it feel uncomfortable to watch. In this film the artist shows us that time can play tricks on us.

# **Bruised peaches**

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018

2018

pigment inkjet print, ed. 2/4

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for Living Australian Artists, 2018

# **Peaches and velvet**

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018  
2018

pigment inkjet print, ed. 1/4

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for  
Living Australian Artists, 2018

# **Bird's eye**

from the *Still Life Studio* series 2018  
2018

pigment inkjet print, ed. 2/4

Purchased, Victorian Foundation for  
Living Australian Artists, 2018



# **Rattlesnakes blues**

from *The California Works* series 2016

2016, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Ava and Zara

2019

pigment inkjet print

# Sphinx

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Emily the strange**

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

## For kids

Do you have a special connection to an animal? Petrina Hicks likes to photograph all sorts of different animals, especially cats. She is interested in the way people and animals relate to each other. Some of her works ask the question: can an animal represent a part of someone's personality? Do you think the little girl and the cat in this photograph look alike? The girl's light-pink dress matches the cat's skin, and the girl's and the cat's eyes are exactly the same colour! The artist is suggesting that humans and animals have more similarities than differences.

# **Serpentina II**

from *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* series 2015

2015, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Birdfingers**

from *The Shadows* series 2013

2013, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Lauren

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print



# **The forest**

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2010, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Breeze

from the *Every Rose has its Thorn* series 2010

2010, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# Infinity

from the *Beautiful Creatures* series 2011

2011, printed 2019

pigment inkjet print

# **Darkness follows**

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008

colour digital video, silent, 4 min

# Babylon

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008

colour digital video, silent, 4 min

# Ghost in the shell

from *The Descendants* series 2008

2008

colour digital video, silent, 4 min