

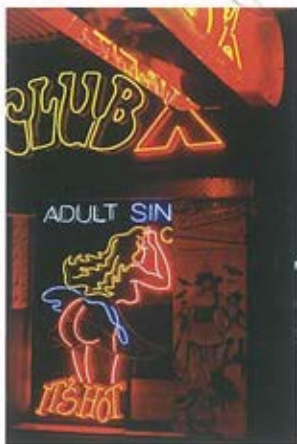
BY THE
LIGHT OF THE
SCREEN



Works



Carla Adams
By The Light Of The Screen II
(Detail)
2016
Acrylic and Gouache on Board



Perth - Barrack St
Photo courtesy of Nate Robert



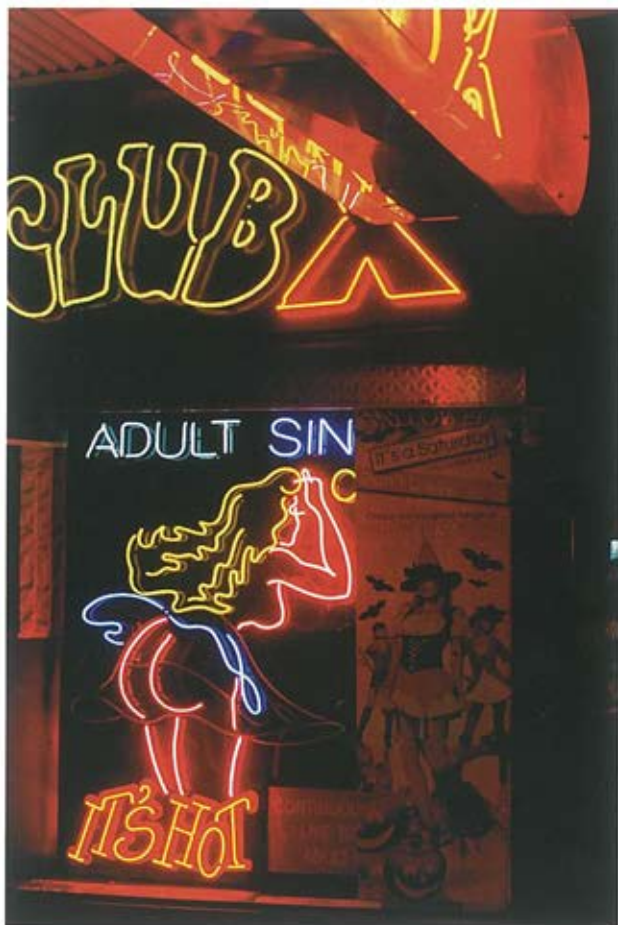
Carla Adams
Neon
2016
Gouache on Board 40 x 50cm

Carla would like to thank Spectrum Project Space and Claire Bushby, Melissa McGrath, Neil Aldum, Steven Beckett, Jarrad Martyn, Celeste Njoo, Garth Adams and of course Wade Taylor.

This exhibition is held in the area of Jinjeejerdup, which is located on Whadjuk Nyoongar Land. The artists acknowledge and respect the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, as the traditional custodians of this land.

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Faceless men and empty spaces



You here for fun or what?

Echoing the semi-private corners of the internet Carla Adams has explored for many years – Chatroulette, Craigslist, OKCupid, to name a few – *By The Light Of The Screen* steps away from the keyboard to unpack the ClubX cinema on Perth's Barrack Street. This 'sordid cave of pleasure' exists in the imaginations of as many as could claim to have descended the stairs from the busy city street to engage in various states of voyeuristic indulgence. There is a commonality in the palpable tension that fills these two realms. The tension of public or shared spaces colonised by private acts; of the boundary between observing and participating; of the perception of an unbridled freedom for expression governed by adherence to a social contract; of the knowledge that the fantasy playing out on the screen is

fragile and finite. Tracking the trajectory of Adams' practice reveals an intentional navigation of both online and away-from-keyboard spaces drawing a network of common ground in human behaviour.

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Fantasy always outweighs reality. Just as an actor transforms themselves as they step across the threshold of a stage; so do the characters that occupy this subterranean space of potential, veil their identity to perform their chosen roles. Through dim lighting, elaborate pseudonyms, no eye contact and a strangely earnest kind of trust, a masquerade takes place. In this scene, promise and failure combine to allow for a 'treasured' experience to be shared, and then swiftly abandoned as the sunlight in approached and everyday identities are resumed. While Adams inhabits the simultaneous role of viewer and participant,

this is no Nan Goldin-esque reportage project. The figures in her work are nameless and 'Faceless in the same way all the men in my work are faceless ... like they could be anyone, they could be no one ... it almost doesn't matter.'¹ In a series of petite ghostly portraits, sickly, undefined faces glow from a murky darkness. No realistic likeness can be drawn, instead the presence before us is that of the idea of the other, rather than an actual body. This could be any Tom, Dick or Harry; a shadow caught out the corner of your eye - but remember, no names past the curtain.

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The reflection of the light from these faceless men turns the focus to the characteristics of the cinema onto which so many fantasies are projected. Instead of presenting a specific experience of the cinema for judgement, Adams seeks to set the scene for each

of her viewers to negotiate themselves. Siphoning and reshaping the potential energy from this empty space, this screen, this cave of shadows; we move amongst stage props of plush blankets, pump bottles, neon signs and look-twice messages in slick brushstrokes. With each new view of the generic physical qualities of this empty space - the empty stage, the sticky carpet underfoot, the too-clean smell of disinfectant, the stained cinema chairs, or the sound of a porno movie - we come to understand that it is exactly the precarious nature of this space that inspires the fantasies that play out within it. The fact that it could all come tumbling down, that the secret could be unearthed, that it could be too uncomfortable to bear is always trumped by the promise of the climax.

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¹ Carla Adams in conversation with author, June 3, 2016

