

PRESS RELEASE

SIGNE PIERCE

31 MAY — 27 JULY 2024

OPENING RECEPTION

FRIDAY, 31 MAY, 12 — 6PM

ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY is proud to present *AMERICAN REFLEXXX* (2015), a jarring social experiment and durational performance video by the reality artist Signe Pierce and the American artist Alli Coates. In addition to showcasing the striking single-channel video, the gallery is offering limited-edition A4 prints of film stills.

“HE WHO SINS IS OF THE DEVIL!” a preacher bellows in the sticky, swampy South Carolina summer heat. His target? American artist Signe Pierce, whose cyborgian performance video *AMERICAN REFLEXXX* has startled thousands, racking up almost two million views since its Youtube debut. Taking place in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina roughly a year before Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, the video seems to anticipate the belligerent machismo that has come to redefine American culture on a national and international stage.

Recorded by her collaborator Alli Coates, we confront Pierce in a short blue bodycon dress, slime green stilettos, and a textureless reflective mask. In fifteen short minutes, we trail Pierce through Coates’ lens, as the performance artist navigates the sultry, neon-lit streets of the southern beach town and its increasingly unruly crowd. With a title sequence rendered in clunky cyber calligraphy that channels Microsoft WordArt graphics deep-fried in vapourware, the film opens up with a definitely drunken, yet comparatively polite (compared to the carnage to come), interaction between Pierce and a shirtless man who demands a photo, pressing himself into her body. From there, things escalate drastically.

As Pierce ambulates from souvenir shop to tattoo parlour, a growing and mostly juvenile crowd follows her, a sea of iPhone eyes recording every move. Equally marked by curiosity and hatred of the unknown, they hurl transphobic and queerphobic insults that grow increasingly vulgar. Without explanation, a man with slit sci-fi contact lenses and a bloodied mask appears; a rubber axe prop is slung over his shoulder; the camera hastily zooms in on him as his eyes flit between performer and cinematographer. Though a brief encounter, there is a deep intimation of a weird, wordless understanding: two alien interlopers challenging the baked-in bullish violence of jacked up Americana. A ticking time bomb.

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The audiovisual jitters grow more intense as the crowd grows more feral. The image becomes hazy; the camera loses its focus. Sweat starts to drip down the blue dress. A teenager in flip flops sneaks up behind Pierce, attempting a trip. She disappears from the frame; Pierce pursues her and is shoved forwards by the rogue teen. Bare skin hits dirty pavement. The artist collapses as the crowd closes in; subtitles are pulled from the image; there are no words left.

The last couple minutes of the film disintegrate just as quickly as the sidewalk falls apart. A barefooted Pierce turns around to face her onlookers and they disperse in fear. The final shot sees the artist posing defiantly inside a temporary tattoo shop, warm blood oozing from a cut on her knee, ostensibly a wound from being pushed to the floor. The camera careens over her shoulder and fades to black as the crunchy pop music dissolves into a haunting silence.

Known for arresting performances and audiovisual work that explores topics of gender, embodiment, and postdigital identity, Signe Pierce is a self-described 'reality artist'. In *AMERICAN REFLEXX*, Pierce pushes the simmering violence of American culture to its logical extreme, eviscerating its darkest impulses in real time. Staring down the artist's mask, the crowd has nowhere to look but at themselves.

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ARTIST INFORMATION

Signe Pierce is an American artist who draws on a multimedia suite of image-making techniques, shot through with a postdigital technicolor palette, to explore notions of gender, identity and the dissolving boundary between simulation and the real. A self-termed 'reality artist', Pierce (b. 1988, Tucson) often draws on her body in durational neon-soaked performance works that address broader systems of violence, sexuality, and paranoia within the American psyche.

Pierce was born in Arizona and currently lives and works in New York. She received her BFA from the School of Visual Arts in 2011. Pierce held her first solo show at ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY in 2017 with *Faux Realities*, an exhibition of 30 photos that questioned the nature of truth and artifice within the digital image, and showed again at the gallery in 2018 with *Metamirrorism*, an exhibition the artist also presented that year at the Athens Biennial.

Pierce's video works and performances have been presented at international institutions, galleries, and biennials including MoMA, New York, US (2019); ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY, London, UK (2019); Eigen+Art Lab, Berlin, Germany (2019); MdbK, Leipzig, Germany (2018); ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY, London, UK (2018), Athens Biennial, Athens, Greece (2018); Düsseldorf Photo, Düsseldorf, Germany (2018); Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France (2015); Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, US (2014); and the New Museum, New York, US (2014).

ABOUT

ANNKA KULTYS GALLERY is a hybrid commercial art project that merges physical and digital experiences. Founded by Annka Kultys in 2015/2022, the East London-based gallery has rapidly become a leading art space for artists (particularly millennials), who engage with technology (and more recently decentralised technology) in both traditional and digital media. Through a robust program of exhibitions that showcase these artists alongside a commitment to promoting the hybrid "phygital" approach, Kultys aims to shape the discourse on contemporary art and technology while pushing the boundaries of what is achievable within both physical and digital gallery spaces.

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Opening Hours: Wednesday — Saturday, 12 — 6pm

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