



Christine Jefferies

■ Subject to Consent

8 February – 22 March 2020

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Introduction

As an internationally-renowned film director, Christine Jeffs is no stranger to looking through a lens. But in this, her first significant solo show, we are offered a far more intimate glimpse of her private photography practice.

We see a vase of flowers. Faces. Land and sea scapes. At first glance, all subjects that countless eyes on millions of Instagram posts might encounter every day. But this work is different. It's scaled up to slow us down. Curious in its jarring contrasts. Engaging in its very etherealness. It forces us to pause. Look. And see.

After a while, the question then becomes, how do I read this?

Does the narrative of a photograph – the story within it if you like – belong to the photographer who captured it, the subject within it, or to us, the viewers?

In her 2018 Master of Fine Art Thesis from the University of Auckland, she offers us a clue. By focusing primarily on the subject / photographer relationship, Christine explores the ethics of engagement, especially where the subjects are people, and consequently ideas around 'ownership' of the resulting image in an age where everything is already 'out there'.

Image © Christine Jeffs
'Subject to Consent', 2018

There is the title piece, Subject to Consent, 2018 where the subject in question, Nicole, is shot in a reflective moment, unposed and unguarded, while sitting in a car largely unaware of the monumentally powerful capturing of light taking place in that millisecond. Or the powerful gaze of Jack, 13 (2018), challenging the world with the passive fury of childhood, while keeping us oldies all in check. More recent landscape images (which Christine refers to as 'anti-heroic and un-dramatic') flick the gaze back to our side. A hypnotic seascape just off the New Zealand coast, the result of a mercy dash to see her very ill mum; and a vase of flowers arranged by her mum (as mum's do). Perhaps reminding us of the fleeting nature of life, and even time itself. And then there is the unforgettable image of her partner, John, in a shockingly beautiful post-operative moment.

Subtle. Deeply moving. And beautifully shot. These are all works that offer us a glimpse into a strangely familiar world; a deeply personal journey of a human being singularly observing the life that surrounds us all.

Scott Lawrie
Director
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