

Gestures of Retribution

19 June - 12 July

Amy Carkeek

Anchoring the exhibition is a bright green neon sign that reads *Which Witch?*, casting an eerie glow over a series of photographic prints depicting the hand gestures of Australian female politicians. Sourced from media archives and removed from their original contexts, these gestures are reimagined through a feminist lens, no longer fleeting moments from press conferences, but symbols charged with new meaning.

The neon text directly responds to the 2011 protest slogan “Ditch the Witch,” famously directed at then-Prime Minister Julia Gillard. With this work, artist Amy Carkeek reclaims the phrase, transforming a misogynist insult into a pointed question. As she explains, *Which Witch?* is “a question, a statement, and a refusal of women’s historical oppression and the simplistic contemporary witch trope.” In this reworking, the “witch” becomes a figure of resistance, someone who speaks back, refuses dismissal, and resists being reduced or ridiculed.

In the accompanying photographs, disembodied hands hover against black backgrounds. Created through cameraless darkroom processes on delicate rice paper, the prints isolate gestures like the pointed finger, the open palm, or the clenched fist. Detached from the bodies and contexts they came from, these movements take on a symbolic quality.

Throughout history, the hand has carried meaning: the raised palm of an orator, the blessing of a saint, the fist of protest. In Buddhist iconography,

mudrā (ritual hand gestures) express internal states without words. Carkeek draws on this visual lineage to present these political gestures as a form of silent speech. They speak without sound, communicating strength, resolve, and presence.

The material process behind the images is slow and tactile. In the darkroom, Carkeek brushes light-sensitive emulsion onto rice paper by hand, then projects the image onto the surface. The print remains invisible until it's developed, at which point the hand slowly emerges, a ghostly form suspended in time. The fibres and imperfections of the paper become part of the image itself, making each print unique. These are not slick reproductions, but textured, time-worn objects that feel somewhere between document and apparition.

Each photograph seems to hover between past and present, image and absence. The gestures feel like familiar yet distant records of real actions, but also traces of something slipping away. This speaks to philosopher Jacques Derrida's idea of the spectre: a presence that returns, unresolved, to trouble the present. In *Gestures of Retribution*, these recurring gestures become reminders of unfinished conversations around gender, authority, and representation.

Together, the neon sign and the photographic prints ask us to reconsider how women in public life are framed and how they might frame themselves. It reclaims language and gesture as tools for asserting presence and agency, offering a response to the forms of dismissal and ridicule that continue to shape public discourse around women in power.

Artist Bio

Amy Carkeek is an Australian artist whose work investigates the contradictory nature of photography, the commodification of images and objects, and the manipulation of everyday language. Central to her practice is how images and objects can be used to deceive through their context and veneer. Specifically, Carkeek's practice explores the demise of the American Dream, the impact of the suburban fantasy on Australian culture, and the ongoing oppression of women by exterior forces that have infiltrated the domestic realm of the home.

www.amycarkeek.com

Image list

1.

Amy Carkeek

Origins, 2025

inkjet on repositionable textile

234.5 x 202 cm

2.

Amy Carkeek

Honesty, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper

58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)

\$5,000

3.

Amy Carkeek

Dignity and Grace #1, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper

58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)

\$5,000

4.

Amy Carkeek

Restrain, 2025

inkjet on repositionable textile

234.5 x 202 cm

5.

Amy Carkeek

Always, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper

58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)

\$5,000

6.

Amy Carkeek

Honesty, 2025

inkjet on repositionable textile

234.5 x 202 cm

7.

Amy Carkeek

Gravity, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper
58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)
\$5,000

8.

Amy Carkeek

Defiance, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper
58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)
\$5,000

9.

Amy Carkeek

Restrain, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper
58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)
\$5,000

10.

Amy Carkeek

Which Witch?, 2025

2 x LED-neon light with clear acrylic back board
130.2 x 60.9 x 1.0 cm and 150.0 x 60.9 x 1.0 cm. (128.1 x 150 cm)
\$4,000

11.

Amy Carkeek

Healer, 2025

Inkjet on repositionable textile
234.5 x 202 cm

12.

Amy Carkeek

Silence, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper
58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)
\$5,000

13.

Amy Carkeek

Dignity and Grace #3, 2023

unique silver gelatin print on rice paper
58 x 43 cm (framed 69 x 60 x 4 cm)
\$5,000

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