

# VIRTUAL GAZE

Annabelle McEwen

*Virtual Gaze* interrogates corporate surveillance of the body, where gestures and expressions are observed, hijacked and interpreted by algorithms. Synthesising analogue photography, digital technologies and material processes, the project considers how surveillance systems and algorithmically curated content shape agency, reality and future.

Restaging expressions from *The Cohn-Kanade Dataset*, a source for machine-learning affect recognition, the portraits use expanded photographic methods such as photogrammetry and gaussian splatting to capture a virtual gaze of the body. Sculptural prints in materials like copper echo the infrastructures of surveillance, exposing and visualising the power structures embedded in contemporary technologies.

## **PARDON THE WAY THAT I STARE**

Dearest,

You seem different today- something's off. That troubles us.

It appears as though you were somewhat dissatisfied with your dining experience this evening. As you picked up your fork, your knuckles furrowed- not as quickly as your brow tends to. It was the very same fork that we are in the habit of setting out for you, and we wonder why your knuckles are not in the very same habit of collecting it. They seem preoccupied; any clarity on this would be much appreciated.

Given your priority status as a frequent customer, we instructed our servers to treat you with the utmost care. They saw that, whilst you waited for your entree, you felt the need to remove your left slipper and scratch the back of your right calf with your toes. The largest toe of your left foot appears to have developed a pronounced lunula that bears resemblance to moon's defeat over flesh-horizon (your cuticles are loose). We do not wish to see you undulate (your cellulite, too, appears morose) and so brought you the marrow of a cow's bone, which should rectify the issue.



## Image List

from right to left

1.

*Compressed Solid: Hard Copy (joy) (sadness) (fear) (surprise) (disgust) (anger)*, 2025

2025

digital print on vinyl

10 x 15 cm

NFS

2.

*Data Centre (Smile, you're on camera)*, 2025

CMYK screen print animation with recorded data centre hum, displayed on ipad with privacy screen-protector mounted to welded steel stand, rust penetrant, copper wire, silicone and plastic bound by screw lock carabiner, electricity

122 x 29 x 62 cm

NFS

3.

*Silicone Valley Conductor (sadness) (anger) (joy) (disgust) (fear) (surprise)*, 2025

etched copper, cast silicone frame

24 x 19 x 2 cm

4.

*Galvanic Envelop*, 2025

photographic print on BFK Rives, punctured with eyelets, hung on zinc hooks and twisted shackles

177 x 23 cm

NFS

5.

*Processed Caress*, 2025

photographic print on BFK Rives, punctured with eyelets, hung on zinc hooks and twisted shackles

200 x 35.5 cm

NFS

6.

*Virtual Embrace*, 2025

photographic print on BFK Rives, punctured with eyelets, hung on zinc hooks and twisted shackles

122 x 40 cm

NFS

7.

*Cameo: Construction of Servers (surprise) (fear) (disgust) (joy) (anger) (sadness)*, 2025

portland cement, graded sand, calcium aluminate cement, calcium carbonate, polyvinyl acetate homopolymer resin

25.5 x 21 x 15 cm

8.

*Facade Map Tile (surprise) (anger) (disgust) (joy) (sadness) (fear)*

2025

dye sublimation print on carpet tile

50 x 50 cm

## About

Annabelle McEwen (She/They) is a multidisciplinary artist practising on unceded Gadigal Land with a Masters of Fine Art. McEwen was awarded the Summer Fellowship at The State Library of NSW in 2025, the Waverley Artist Studio Residency in 2025 and The Ellen O'Shaughnessy Printmaking Award in 2019.

They were a finalist in The National Photographic Portrait Prize at The National Portrait Gallery (2024), The Mullins Conceptual Photography Prize at Muswellbrook Regional Arts Centre (2025, 2024, 2023) among many others.

Their work has featured in many exhibitions, recently including solo exhibition *The Smartest Horse in the World* at Ethan Frome, *Dead Ringer* at Tiles Lewisham, *Sydney Contemporary* with The National Art School and *DISRUPTION: Discourse and Exchange* at KMITL Thailand.

Their work has been acquired by The National Art School, The City of Sydney Art Collection, RMIT Printmaking Collection, Curtin Uni Printmaking Collection among others.

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