

DARREN SYLVESTER

*Out of Life*

S+S Sydney

29 June–4 August 2018

Sullivan+Strumpf Sydney is delighted to present, *Out of Life*, an exhibition of new work by Darren Sylvester. Combining references to Hollywood, magic, mortality and Microsoft, the exhibition was inspired by the purchase of an unidentified 1970s science fiction space suit. *Out of Life* continues Sylvester's ongoing interest in authenticity, desire and death; subjects he examines through an off-beat narrative borne out of a lost moment of pop-culture.

Last year Sylvester purchased a 1970s-style science fiction space suit from an auction house sale of old costumes from Hollywood films and TV shows. Catalogued with no known provenance, the costume was rendered relatively worthless. The only clue to its history was the name, *Stacey*, hand-written on a tag on the inside. Was Stacey the actor's name or a TV character? In *Out of Life*, Sylvester uses her long-forgotten costume to resurrect Stacey in two large-format film photographs; trapped in character forever inside a B-Grade film set. Bored and melancholy, Stacey waits for her scene to be called, a battle to begin, for love to arrive – or somehow, to go home. Left all alone in this make-believe universe, Stacey holds a feeling relatable to everyone – being all out of life.

*The End* is a double-panelled photograph which mimics the end-titles of Universal Pictures films. Sylvester produced a custom-made balloon to represent the Earth and appropriated the text from the end screen of the 1980s arcade game 'Missile Command'. 'The End' replaces the ubiquitous 'Game Over' creating a sense of finality and reinforcing that there is no home to which to return.

Presented on a bed of red sand, a pair of mirrored-steel Ouija boards imply a mystic connection to the past. Perhaps best known via the Parker Bros board game or as a horror film trope, here, the mirrored surfaces of the Ouija suggest power generated through material make-up.

Reflecting on the distance between space and time, Sylvester designed each board with Stacey in mind. *Dingbat Ouija*, is made entirely using the pre-emoji graphics of selected Dingbat fonts introduced by Microsoft in all versions of Windows, making it one of the most universal languages on Earth. The second is based on the packaging design of *Lucky Charms* an American breakfast cereal. Each box of *Lucky Charms* contains a number of marshmallow 'charms' – half-moons, shooting stars, four leaf clovers, horseshoes and diamonds – that are said to bring good luck.

Suggesting that all new beginnings can be bought in this hyper-consumer culture, Sylvester probes the contemporary context in *IKEA Sunrise*, an image of a studio-built ocean illuminated by dry ice and an IKEA 'Fado' lamp.

Darren Sylvester's multi-disciplinary practice involves photography, sculpture, video, music and performance. Often incorporating a complex matrix of pop-culture elements and executed with the production quality associated with high-end fashion publishing, Sylvester's work explores notions of contemporary ennui, pathos and mortality through narratives that are direct, yet inherently complex.

Sylvester has exhibited widely both nationally and internationally and also released his third studio album, *Touch a Tombstone* in March this year. Selected solo shows include *Céline*, Bus Projects Melbourne (2017); *Darren Sylvester*, Neon Parc, Melbourne (2017); *Broken Model*, Sullivan+Strumpf, Sydney (2016); *Darren Sylvester*, VOLTA NY, Soho, New York (2013); *Darren Sylvester – Take Me To You*, Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (NAFA), Singapore (2010); and the major survey exhibition *Our Future Was Ours*, Australia Centre for Photography, Sydney (2008). Recent group exhibitions include *Midwinter Masters: Percy Grainger: In the Company of Strangers*, The Gallery, Bayside Arts and Cultural Centre, Victoria (2015); *Cars = My Automolove*, Caboolture Regional Art Gallery, Caboolture (2014); *Melbourne Now*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2013); *NGV Studio: Wired for Melbourne Sound*, National Gallery of Victoria, Melbourne (2013); and *We used to talk about love: Balnaves Contemporary*, Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney (2013). Sylvester won the Fisher's Ghost Art Award at the Campbelltown Arts Centre in 2016 and Josephine Ulrick and Win Schubert Photography Award for 2011. His work is held in a number of public collections including the National Gallery of Victoria, Art Gallery of New South Wales, the Queensland Art Gallery, Art Gallery of Western Australia and National Gallery of Australia.