Wiebke Leister: Echoes and Transformations
20 Oct – 9 Nov 2016

Private View: THU 20 Oct 2016, 6.30-9.30pm
Performance with NaoKo TakaHashi, 20 Oct 2016, 8.00pm
Performance with Kaho Aso, 2 Nov 2016, 8.00pm

‘Echoes and Transformations’ looks at the boundaries between embalming and enmasking: being in a skin and under a skin, in and under a mask, looking at a mask and seeing through a mask as something that equally changes one’s gait and one’s voice while playing with sensations of displacement and transformation. The work treats the human face less as a façade but as an object that – even though central to our understanding of what it means to be human – is only ever in the process of approximating a subject: being filled by a subject, worn on the face of a subject. A process of becoming invested with meaning that might occur during the encounter with an image-object, possibly inverting the relationship of the person who sees and that what can be seen.

A main reference has been the teaching of Japanese Noh theatre, in which the mask works as an extension of the actor: nuanced like a face, while the face itself is shown as an impassive mask. When the mask is placed onto the face the actor becomes enmasked while the mask has become enfaced. The work meditates on the moment in space and time when the mask folds onto the face and how a relationship between object and actor is established across the gap between two surfaces. The images seek to visually translate this sense of a living object into photography - actively enveloping viewers into pseudo-positives, personae and the cutting and folding of pages.

Wiebke Leister is a German artist and writer based in London. She studied photography at Essen University (Folkwang) and gained a PhD from the Royal College of Art in London. Her work investigates conditions of photographic non-likeness, in particular presentations of expressive signs of the face in relation to its facial canvas.She is course leader for MA Photography at London College of Communication, co-organizer of the Photography and the Contemporary Imaginary research hub, co-convener of the Theatre of Photography research network and a core member of the Photography and the Archive Research Centre at University of the Arts London.