

Molitor

Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili *Flush*

Opening:
Friday 23 September
2022
6—9 pm

Exhibition:
23 September —
26 November
2022

Wrinkles in a plastic bag, puckers in a piece of tape, filaments in latex scars found in a Halloween shop—Ketuta Alexi-Meskhishvili turns her attention to the incongruities in such skin-like veneers in *Flush*, the inaugural exhibition at Molitor. The title refers to the heat that rises and reddens the skin in a rush of emotion—shame, desire, agitation—or in the throes of illness. This reaction is visceral, a reminder of porousness, disrupting any illusion of control over the body. You can conceive of Alexi-Meskhishvili's colors like a creeping and charged flush of chroma, as across the photographs, curtains and film that comprise the exhibition, it is evident that her surfaces are invested in permeability.

Where a photograph is classically understood to freeze a moment in time, Alexi-Meskhishvili's work undoes such claims of fixity, positing the medium instead as a process of developing and revealing. She also broaches this impetus to preserve with some tongue in cheek by taking silicone body parts (a nose that will last forever!) as a recurrent motif. Typically staging her compositions in the window of her studio or directly on the surface of a negative film emulsion in a "camera-less" method, she melds experimental analogue techniques and digital scanning to make images in which the residual details of this deliberately precarious production shape their subject matter. Shadows, scratches, translucency, blurriness, overexposure and the black framing device of the negative itself stand like material traces of the friction between light and dark, transparency and obstruction, that makes a photograph. She also homes in on transparency in particular in the translucent curtains *Fabric* and *Dusty Days* (both 2022) printed with enlarged photographs, a form of installation she has returned to since 2015. Here, the curtains also create the conditions to project her film, *Flush* (2022), by partially blocking the light from the gallery's large windows. In her first foray into moving image,

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Alexi-Meskhishvili stitches together poignant clips shot on 16 mm and her iPhone including pregnant bellies, the hands of a sculptor friend of hers kneading plaster, a teenage girl's hair bleached by vitiligo and the drifting shapes formed by bubbles in a cup of coffee in homage to Jean-Luc Godard's cult scene in *Two or three things I know about her* (1967).

These are contingent images. They're vulnerable. Alexi-Meskhishvili lets in the grotesque, beautiful, spooky, abject, feminine, uncanny, then tugs this swirl of associations towards abstraction. Her work settles a constellation of registers into ambivalent cohesion. Life filters into art, as art filters into life. We're left with the surface and its jolt of immediacy.

—Camila McHugh