

# LUNGLEY

Text by **Maria Hohmann**

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## Introduction

*Strip and lay bare.*

*Landscaping the body and humanizing plants.*

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William Mackrell (London, b. 1983) uses his very personal, bodily sensations in relation to his chosen subject matter as well as his direct surroundings as the key to creating his performances, photographs, paintings and installations. At first glance, his works, often executed in reduced, monochromatic color schemes, show a poetic formal aesthetic. But when looking up closer, a darker, more sinister and unsettling layer is revealed.

This juxtaposition in the work of Mackrell leans upon Mark Fisher's concept of Hauntology, a very complex philosophical idea, originally developed by the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. Mackrell uses this concept to explain his uncanny look on the world around him. The idea of hauntology in Mark Fisher's approach is that the present is haunted by 'ghosts' of lost futures and thus the future is always experienced as haunting. The word hauntology is derived from a combination of the words haunting and Ontology, the philosophical branch into the study of the nature of being that investigates what entities exist and how they are related to one another, like the bodies and landscapes, plants and humans, and future and past in Mackrell's work.

For this exhibition, Mackrell has created a new series of large scale works in which he uses the artichoke as a metaphor to reflect upon the ephemeral side of life. Artichokes, beautiful, strong vegetables known for their cleansing properties, are left to die and decay. Their scattered bodies, petals and seeds have been spread out over paper and sprayed over by metallic paint, leaving an imprint of their existence. But in contrast to the characteristics of the plant, with its hard stem, harsh petals and spiky contours to protect the heart, their imprint shows a completely different reality, a diffuse, fragile, albeit dark and mysterious one, but equally difficult to penetrate and grasp.

In a new series of hair pieces, photographs of hairy body parts are cropped and enlarged, zooming in on a particular part of the body without revealing the identity of the model. The bodily parts are mutilated with an etching needle. With a meticulous, rhythmic and physical movement, each individual hair on the body has been scratched out of the paper, highlighting their presence while standing out against the darker, smooth foreground. By blowing up the scale, the lines and curves of the body become abstract and evoke the contours of a natural landscape.

In the *UV scorched bodies*, the idea of natural seems to be left behind. UV radiation heats and scorches bodies and landscapes. UV photographs show the different colours that are bound to certain temperatures, as the colours in Mackrells photos have been heightened to the extreme. The pink and purple cold fluorescent colours are referring to an eerie and daunting future, nurtured by the paralysing thought and deep angst of the catastrophic, caused by climate change and rise of temperatures and the end of the world as we know it.

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Maria Hohmann is an independent Art Historian, Project Coordinator at LaunchPad LaB, Writer and Editor. **This introductory text was commissioned to accompany the exhibition *Strip* a solo exhibition by William Mackrell.**

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Exhibition view: *Strip* at Lungley Gallery, London (2023).