LUNGLEY

William Mackrell
Cover-up

14/10 - 14/11/2026

Lungley Gallery is pleased to present a solo exhibition by William Mackrell bringing together a new body of works that examine the relationship between censorship, visibility and the act of looking.

Cover Up (First Kiss)
2026

61.5 x 48 cm
Etching on vintage film poster, mounted on aluminium

Mackrell begins with found and appropriated photographic images—fragments of popular culture, private moments, publicity, spectacle and everyday life. Across each work, areas of the original image have been obscured by the familiar, almost bureaucratic device of the black censor mark. Yet rather than simply applying censorship to the image, Mackrell physically works around it.

In ***Cover-up***, censorship operates not simply as a means of concealment but as a visual language. The black rectangle is instantly recognisable: a symbol of information withheld, identity protected, desire suppressed, or an image deemed unsuitable for public view. Mackrell isolates and exaggerates this device, transforming an act of restriction into an object of attention.

There is also a tension between the apparent immediacy of the source photographs and the labour invested in their transformation.

The original images may have been captured or reproduced in an instant; Mackrell's intervention is deliberately slow and physical. Every scratched line records the artist's hand and the gradual dismantling of the photographic surface. The works consequently become

records of both an image and its attempted disappearance.

In pieces such as **Cover Up** *(First Kiss),* a vintage black-and-white photograph of a couple in an intimate embrace carries a purple “CENSORED” stamp; the surrounding field has been etched into a dense, textured ground that both frames and abstracts the remaining image.

The exhibition brings together works in which the censor mark varies in scale and intensity—from discrete interventions to areas that almost overwhelm the original photograph. In some works, the surrounding image is reduced to a fragile, ghost-like residue. In others, colour, text and recognisable details remain visible beneath the dense network of scratches. Across the series, Mackrell continually shifts the balance between revelation and concealment.

Rather than resolving the question of what should or should not be seen, Cover Up leaves the viewer confronted with the mechanics of looking itself. The censor mark tells us that something is being withheld, while the painstaking surface surrounding it insists that we look more closely.

This process of controlled removal finds a close parallel in Mackrell’s concurrent etchings of photographed body parts. In those works, the artist crops and magnifies anonymous sections of hairy skin, backs of heads, limbs, torsos, before meticulously scratching out each individual hair from the surface of the C-type print with an etching needle.

The cumulative labour transforms the photograph into a sculptural field in which the body becomes landscape-like, optical, and universal rather than personal. Both series share a direct, physical engagement with the photographic or printed surface: one isolates and elevates the external gesture of institutional censorship that seeks to suppress the body; the other performs an intimate, almost forensic erasure that simultaneously reveals and abstracts the body’s own surfaces.

Together they map a continuum of touch, absence, and desire, in which the artist’s hand negotiates the mediated image, whether culturally regulated or privately observed, through sustained acts of scratching and uncovering.

William Mackrell's Cover Up turns censorship into a physical process: the more the image is obscured, the more insistently we are invited to look.

William Mackrell lives and works in London. He studied BA Painting at Chelsea College of Art (2005) and MFA Fine Art at Goldsmiths, University of London (2016).

His work has been shown in solo exhibitions at international galleries and institutions including Whitechapel Gallery, London; Musée National Eugène Delacroix, Paris, France, Lungley Gallery, London; Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna, Austria; The RYDER, Madrid, Spain.

Public collections include the Israel Museum, Jerusalem, Israel; Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, USA; Manchester Art Gallery, UK; and the Justin Art House Museum, Melbourne, Australia.