

## Marisa Kriangwiat Holmes

### *Dear Big Hush*

March 1–April 5, 2025



Towards is pleased to present *Dear Big Hush*, an exhibition of recent work by Marisa Kriangwiat Holmes.

---

“So I work to make myself into a seer — And let’s close with a pious hymn.” — Arthur Rimbaud in a letter to Paul Demeny, 1871.

I have often thought of Marisa Kriangwiat Holmes’ oeuvre as an ode to the surface, a space she approaches via the photographic and the imagistic. Within certain artistic discourses (particularly in the realm of painting) surface has been a concern for about half a millennium — variably as an illusionistic window, as a space marked by its flatness, or as a pedestal for the sculptural application of paint or the accumulation of materials. This is not to say that Holmes’ work is not situated within this teleology. Rather, her work takes this engagement with surface and fragments it, drawing it into dialogue with other disciplines such as music, design, and craft. The focus here is to draw attention to the ways in which material, surface and framing dictate the reception of the image — a challenge to the idea of the image as a standalone object and the over reliance on historical context as the clarifying device for the image par excellence.

Music, graphic design, and patterning almost take precedent to the image itself within Holmes’ work. This is to say her interest lies in the way in which the frame is the critical moment to make sense of meaning, affect, and connotation. Take, for example, her use of matboard. Typically used as a sort of pedestal for an image-based work, it is akin to a spotlight, honing our attention to the composition as a whole within the larger structure of a frame. In her case, it sits halfway; her images are mounted underneath in a passe-partout but rather framing in the whole of the composition, they obfuscate the bulk of the picture. However, geometric cut-outs and peepholes re-hone our focus in the form, and thus constitute an almost dialectical negotiation of the mat’s function.

In her work, she mobilizes analogue means of framing and editing her images which she pulls from an array of sources—friends, family, pets, and found images all constitute her pictorial building blocks. But it is precisely her use of the analogue that speaks to the contemporary and digital. The litany of referents and images existing in schizoid tandem is evidently akin to the ways in which we are now subject to an endless deluge of content but by extension her interest in framing and surfaces speaks to the ways in which we consume this flood. The image no longer (and honestly, never did) exist on its own.

# Towards

The frame simply gave way for the user interface and the palimpsest usurped by the screenshot. Oftentimes Holmes' prints images on glossy material eschewing the usual tendency towards matte. The shine of an image reflects the user back onto it, bears the mark of the spotlight, draws attention to its objecthood. Not the image as a transcendental idea but something indebted to its material substrate and context.

The presence of sheet music belies the aforementioned concerns, along the vector of pattern. One can defer to biographical information—Holmes' history in bands and as a band-photographer—to point to its presence here. Or, the formal and conceptual echoes between Holmes' treatment of images and music through her use of splicing, overlaying, and collaging. Alternatively, there is sheet music as a structure—a kind of concrete or semi-reified device to make sense of the sonic, a kind of support that determines the encounter.

I gravitate here towards an image of Uffie taken by Holmes' taken by an eighteen year old Holmes in Hong Kong. Growing up in the late aughts, in the non-space of Vancouver (to loosely paraphrase Lisa Robertson's description of the port city in the opening chapter of *The Baudelaire Fractal*) indie darlings like Uffie were ever only really encountered in the space of party photo blogs—a seductive feed of photographs suggesting the possibility of bohemian life elsewhere. Now, here, I feel closer to the subject than ever but all luster has given way for a film of sweat.

– Leo Cocar

---

Towards and Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes would like would like to thank Superframe for their generous support of this exhibition through the Superframe Framing Fund.

---

**Marisa Kriangwiwat Holmes** (b. 1991, Hong Kong) lives and works in New York, NY. Recent solo and two-person exhibitions include *Infinity Ball*, Unit 17, Vancouver, Canada; *My Owns*, Project Native Informant, London, UK; *Everything Leaks*, Polygon Gallery, North Vancouver; *Keep Your Eyes On Your Prizes*, Calaboose, Montreal. Select group exhibitions include *Iowa Projects*, Brooklyn; *Nicelle Beauchene Gallery*, New York; *Rose Easton*, London; the *National Gallery of Canada*.

In 2022 Holmes was the recipient of the New Generation Photography Award from the National Gallery of Canada. She was the winner of the second annual Lind Prize in 2017. Holmes received her BFA from the Emily Carr University of Art and Design and is currently finishing her MFA at Hunter College in New York.