

Heji Shin

*Angel Energy*

November 17 – January 11, 2020

Real babies feed at the breast of Jedy Vales, a digital avatar recently launched by the adult entertainment platform YouPorn. In these images, the mother has been replaced by an algorithmic fantasy, generated by the data-mined desires of millions of users. As if on maternity leave from her work as YouPorn’s “Digital Brand Ambassador,” Jedy now hallucinates human angels, influencing her little user at the level of the interface or breast. And in exchange for the free use of the avatar, Heji Shin has assisted in its design, altering and retouching her for the exhibition.

Two other series present images of real and fake Kardashians, respectively. In a shoot for CR Fashion Book, Shin assembled Kris, Kim, Khloe, Kylie and Kendall at Milk Studios, Los Angeles, for their first fashion editorial in five years. Peeling off the outer layer of her Polaroids to expose the chemical emulsion, then re-photographing these and boosting the colors in post, Shin gets a sort of distressed icon verging on hotel lobby art look when the celebs are printed onto shiny metal surfaces. Shooting again for The Face magazine, the artist cast Kardashian lookalikes on Instagram and replicated the entire family in New York. In one image, a radiant “Kim” takes a phone call while breast-feeding a dummy baby. The makeup, retouching and then the vintage Polaroid filters applied to these images simulate the look of certain Kardashian Instagram posts, where body modification and media manipulation converge with network effects to generate new powers of branding. “Fake-riarchy” is an image that’s been printed out as wallpaper, installed like a commercial billboard in the gallery.

What happens when chthonic chaos plugs into the dark smotherly powers of surveillance capitalism? Would this be post-patriarchy? And we still don’t know what she wants. Maybe everything. On the horizon, an army of angels assembles. They are killing it.

*Angel Energy* is Heji Shin’s first solo exhibition in Los Angeles. Recent exhibitions include a solo show at Kunsthalle Zurich in 2018, The Whitney Biennial 2019 and *Kanye* at Galerie Buchholz, Berlin, 2019.