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m<sup>2</sup> Gallery

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## *Opera Interna* - Alexa Wright 11<sup>th</sup> November 2007 – January 6<sup>th</sup> 2008

This project examines the point at which the bodily experience of self meets and intersects with the performed identity of a character. An underlying theme of the opera photographed here (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) is an exploration of the relationship between artifice and reality - it is my intention that these large scale, very high definition digitally manipulated images question notions of the real on many different levels.

The physical presence of the images is designed to have an emotional impact in itself, whilst their theatricality offers the viewer a critical distance from the subjects. The 'larger than life' scale of the images allows the audience to question the degree to which the emotion performed by each singer is 'genuine'. I became interested in the slippage in the artifice of wig, make up etc. as they are disturbed during the act of performing. The vulnerability and 'humanness' suggested by these 'mistakes' seems to raise interesting questions about the extent to which people unconsciously communicate emotional or mental states in addition to those they are conscious of performing.

Singers performed individually for the camera, but in this case locations were added later. Techniques such as the digital relocation of the figure into a different setting and flat, 'un-theatrical' lighting are used to emphasise these themes of artifice and reality. Made possible by a residency at Welsh National Opera. Supported by a Small Grant in the Creative and Performing Arts from the Arts & Humanities Research Board.

Nine C-Type photographs mounted on aluminium. Each 90 x 95cm.

*Alexa Wright is a visual artist working with photography and interactive digital media. She is a Senior Research Fellow and Lecturer at the Centre for Art, Research and Technology Education at the University of Westminster in London. Alexa's recent works include digitally manipulated portraits of opera singers, Opera Interna (2005) and Cover Story (2006), a video installation investigating the idea of the face as interface between self and world, commissioned for UK Science Week (Norwich), 2006.*

*Alexa collaborates with Alf Linney, Professor of Medical Physics at University College London. Alexa and Alf's latest project is Conversation Piece, an intelligent room that can converse with its occupants, creating a space for audience and machines to act as performers and observers in a real-time, live work. Alexa is also currently involved in an interdisciplinary research project at University of Toronto exploring the psycho-social effects of heart transplant. Alexa has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad. She is working towards a PhD on the subject of monstrosity.*