

## Practitioner's Statement

### **Neo**

Ebony Brown

My practical '**Neo**' is inspired by the concept of digital identities and how they can act as alter egos to our real world selves. Similarly to how when online we present ourselves to others in a way that shows our best attributes, I have chosen to call this series of images 'Neo' as it contains select letters from my name, which I have used to create another name which I find more appealing than my given name.

I first developed an interest in capturing concepts through photography and film after viewing short films by performance artist Tahliah Debrett Barnett, better known by her stage name FKA twigs. From this initial interest I began my search for contemporary photographers, particularly those who captured staged images, with dynamic use of lighting, architecture and human form. Artists such as Bettina Von Zwehl, Geert Goiris and Haroon Mirza significantly influenced the aesthetic considerations for my series, especially concerning the use of dramatic lighting in my final series of photographs.

The most defining visual aspect of this series of works is the use of lighting and particularly the contrast between areas in shadow and areas of light, which gives the images the futuristic, 'digital' world image I was attempting to capture, similar to Haroon Mirza's LED light installations. The cool washed out tones help to exemplify this and also add to the sombre, contemplative atmosphere of the series.

Though these images feature myself as the model, I did not intend for them to be a realistic representation of my real life identity. I had purposely altered my appearance for the capturing of these images using a variety of cosmetic products, making my physical form near impossible to recognise in comparison to my everyday appearance. Through the alteration of my physical appearance I draw the connection between reality and the misconceptions of digital personas as I explore the ways in which people reconstruct themselves through technology to become their most appealing versions, both in personality and aesthetics.

This concept was close to me as I myself was guilty of practicing this in my interactions with people I met online. By taking on an alternate version of myself that showed only my best, or even characteristics that I did not even possess outside of the digital world; I became the idea of a girl who did not truly exist but was instead loosely based off of my relatively normal experiences, relationships and aspirations.

Online, people are far more capable of putting aside their fears of rejection and forming relationships when they have the ability to show only their best qualities, however my series of works questions whether these relationships have true substance if they are based off of lies, both blatant and omissive. Forlorn expressions, and a moody lighting and colour scheme show the reality of the perfected image, and the underlying self-esteem issues that are present when we alter our selves solely to appeal to the preferences of others.