

20+9+5

Clare Rae

1st May 2015 - 23rd May 2015

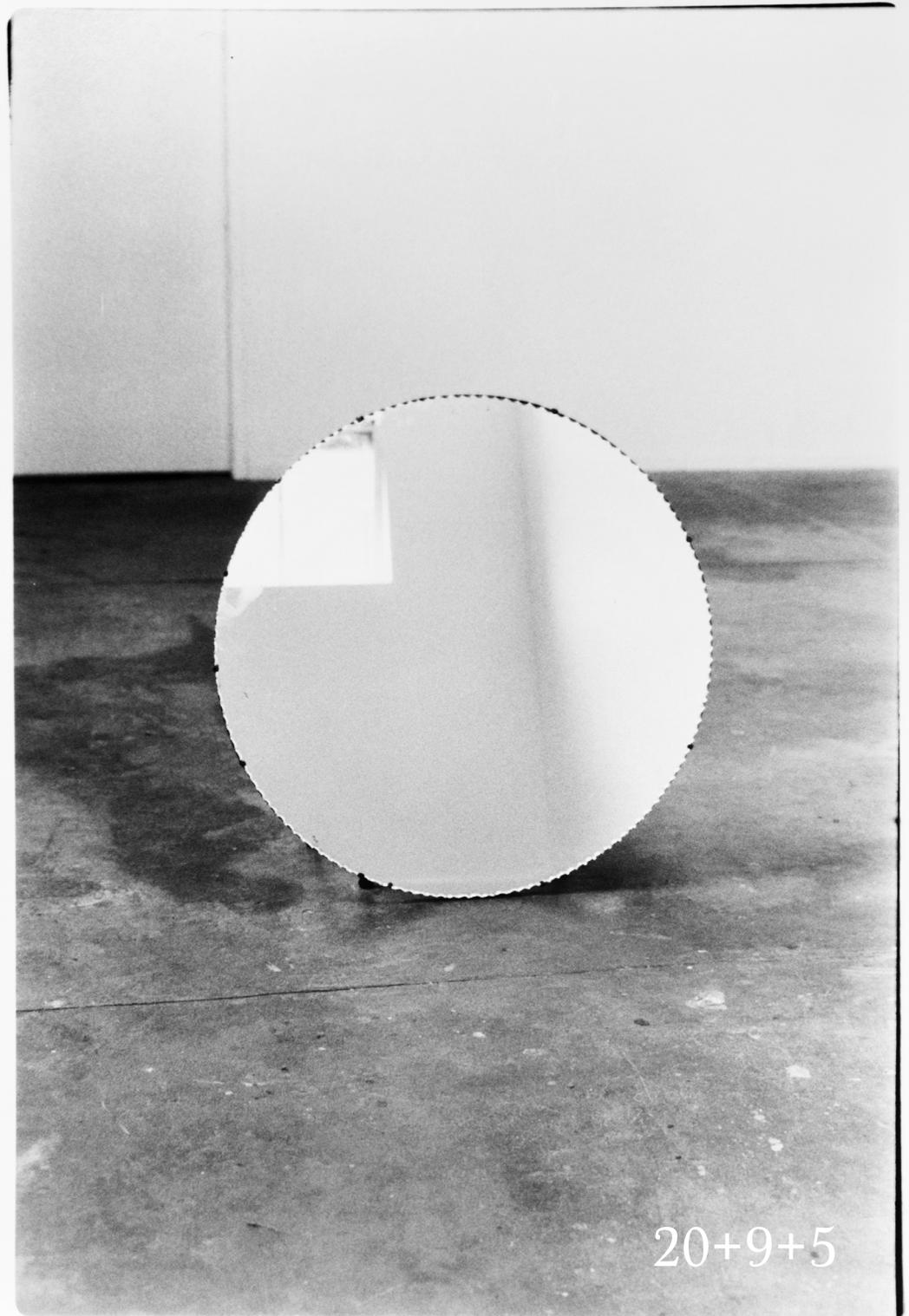
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20 years ago I learnt how to print photographs in the darkroom. I was 14, in Year 9 at high school, and spent a lot of time in there hiding from puberty and immature boys. I had a 35mm Pentax Spotmatic that I used to photograph inane things, mainly my pet cockatiel Claude. Time passed in strange ways in the darkroom; minutes took forever to tick over as I watched the developer tray, and lunchtimes would melt away in a flash. The red light and strong smells took a while to get used to; soon I found myself besotted with the experience of creating images, and the beautiful alchemy of waiting for them to appear before my eyes.

Last year I spent 9 months being pregnant. After waiting to conceive I found myself in another state of waiting, as each week was checked off bringing me closer to having a baby. In that time my body morphed from its usual state into a vessel for another life, and my identity changed to accommodate this new status. Pregnancy is its own billboard, there's no hiding it, and I oscillated between feeling like a target, and feeling proud of this newfound capacity. Time passed in interesting ways; days flew by in a fog of naps and nausea and the birth inched closer bit by bit. The last few weeks moved like a freight train as my induction date was set. When the day arrived, the preceding period of time seemed to vanish, as I birthed my baby and my body reverted back to being one person.

Now I am a mother to a 5 month old baby. The first days and weeks of his life are barely remembered as we project forward to mounting milestones, the first smile, the first tooth, solid food. Time is slippery, speeding up and slowing down at various intervals during the day and night. I thought I would detest the sleep deprivation, but it's not so bad. My body has adapted to sustaining another person and I'm figuring out my new identity as Fox's mother.

* * *

The series of photographs in this exhibition were captured in the Sutton Project space between October 2014 and May 2015. Small performative gestures take place, and the camera acts as both collaborator and viewer, co-conspirator and audience. The photographs were printed in the darkroom in bursts between feeding my baby. They have a roughness and immediacy. They record an inhabitation and navigation of the project space whilst also bearing witness to the process of their creation. 15 seconds, F.8, filter 2 1/2, no time to spot the dust and scratches.

Thank you to Stephen Palmer, Fox Palmerae, Sutton Gallery and Project Space, and Chris Day.

