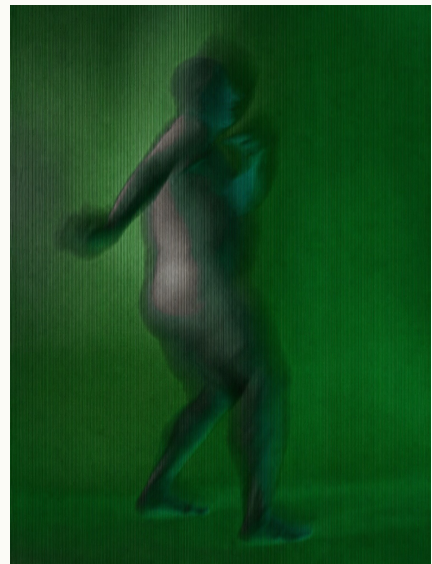


Visibility Without Knowledge

Marina Smith

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Visibility Without Knowledge

Contemporary visual culture often links visibility with access to knowledge: the more a person is shown, the more understandable they appear to become. Documentary photography, social media, reality television, and pornography operate within this shared assumption. They differ in purpose and aesthetic form, but they often rely on the same underlying idea: increased visibility makes a person more available to interpretation.

There are images in which this connection begins to break down. This is the point my work examines.

The concept of opacity, developed by Édouard Glissant, emerged from his writing on relations between cultures shaped by colonial history. One of his central claims is that a person can never be fully translated into another person's system of knowledge. Relation does not require complete understanding. Presence does not require exhaustive interpretation. Glissant uses the term opacity to describe this irreducibility. His thinking makes it possible to ask a wider question about visibility and knowledge in contemporary visual culture.

I am interested in the next step of this argument. When a person becomes maximally visible, do they become more knowable? Is there a direct relation between the degree of bodily visibility and the degree of knowledge available about a person?

Photography is a particularly charged medium for this question. It carries a strong claim to evidence. A photograph is still commonly understood as a trace of presence, a record of an event, a sign that something stood before the camera. When the object of the image is a human body, this trust becomes even stronger. The photographed body creates a sense of immediate access to the person.

Pornography takes this logic to its limit. It is built around the promise of maximum access to the body, and for this reason it produces a particularly strong impression of knowledge.

Behind this impression lies another, quieter assumption. We tend to understand openness as a matter of degree. A person can open themselves slightly, further, completely. This model implies a simple relation: the more is shown, the less remains hidden.

This relation feels so natural that it is rarely examined. Yet it shapes the way we look at images of bodies. We expect a person to become more intelligible as their visibility increases.

Pornography tests this expectation in its most extreme form. If openness is a measurable quantity, then maximum bodily visibility should coincide with maximum transparency.

It does not.

Even an image in which the body becomes almost fully available to view does not resolve the question of the person. It may increase the amount of visible information, but it does not bring knowledge to its limit. At a certain point the image continues to show the body, while the person does not become more knowable.

This mismatch puts pressure on the original model. Perhaps openness cannot be understood as a quantity. Full bodily visibility is not the end point of openness. It is one way a person may appear in an image, but it is not a measure of their transparency.

For my artistic practice, the wider question is this: what moves people to enter public visibility, and how do they live with the consequences of that exposure? I have long been interested in the desire to be seen, heard, noticed, desired; the desire to leave a trace, to make contact with the world, to bring a body, a voice, an image, or a personal history into public space. Such appearance always has an aftermath. Public visibility quickly gathers other people's fantasies, diagnoses, moral judgements, desires, and ready-made names.

For this reason, adult entertainment industry has become an important field of reference for me. I am not primarily interested in sexuality as a theme, or pornography as a genre in itself. I am interested in the situation in which a person makes their own bodily exposure part of public existence.

Pornography matters here because of its extreme clarity. It takes a field usually associated with privacy, shame, desire, and social prohibition, and moves it into the space of the image. The body becomes available to view professionally and directly: through scene, role, genre, and the technical system of filming.

What matters to me is the position of the person inside this system. The adult performer is not simply an object of someone else's gaze. They work with their own visibility: they enter it, endure it, organise it, sometimes use it, sometimes manage its consequences. This position holds together the desire to be seen and the constant danger of being understood too quickly.

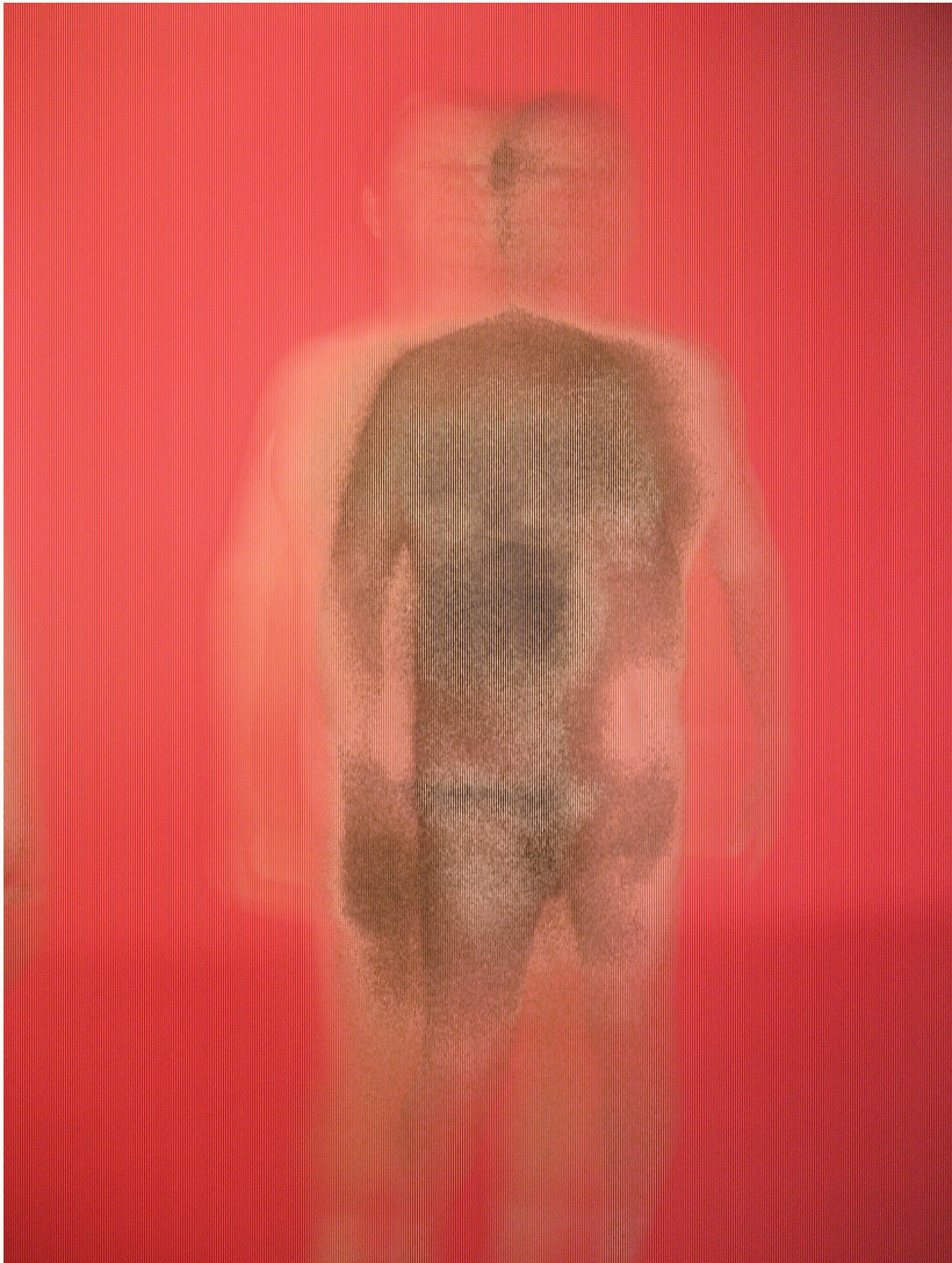
This is why adult entertainment offers such precise material for thinking about openness. In it, bodily visibility reaches an almost maximum degree, while the question of the person remains.

My photographic practice begins at this point.

I photograph adult entertainers in the form of portraiture, while disturbing the usual expectation of portrait clarity. The viewer is looking at someone whose body already exists in a public field: as image, as work, as an object of looking and desire. The photograph shows this body, but refuses to support the fantasy of full access.

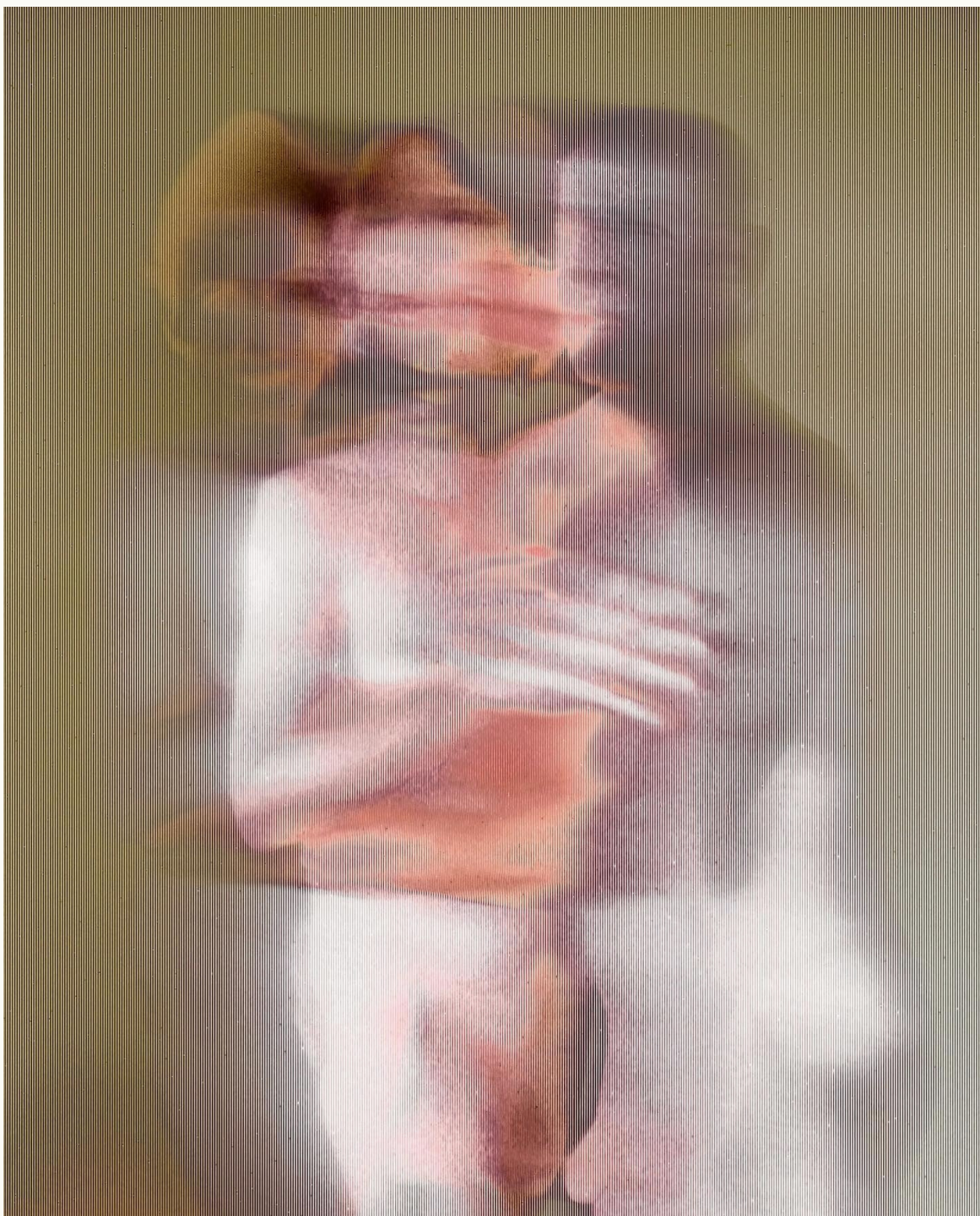
Blur, digital noise, unstable colour, low resolution, and optical failure create images in which bodily exposure remains present, while its meaning changes. Blur shows the limit of what can be extracted from bodily visibility. The body remains open to view, but this openness no longer appears as a path towards transparency.

This is how opacity enters my practice: as a principle for constructing the image. Blur hides part of the detail, while keeping the body in the frame. It changes the status of what remains before the eye. The naked body loses its force as evidence. Knowledge reaches its limit here.



Before the Face

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



Flesh Noise

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



Small Figure on Red Ground

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



Dark Room

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



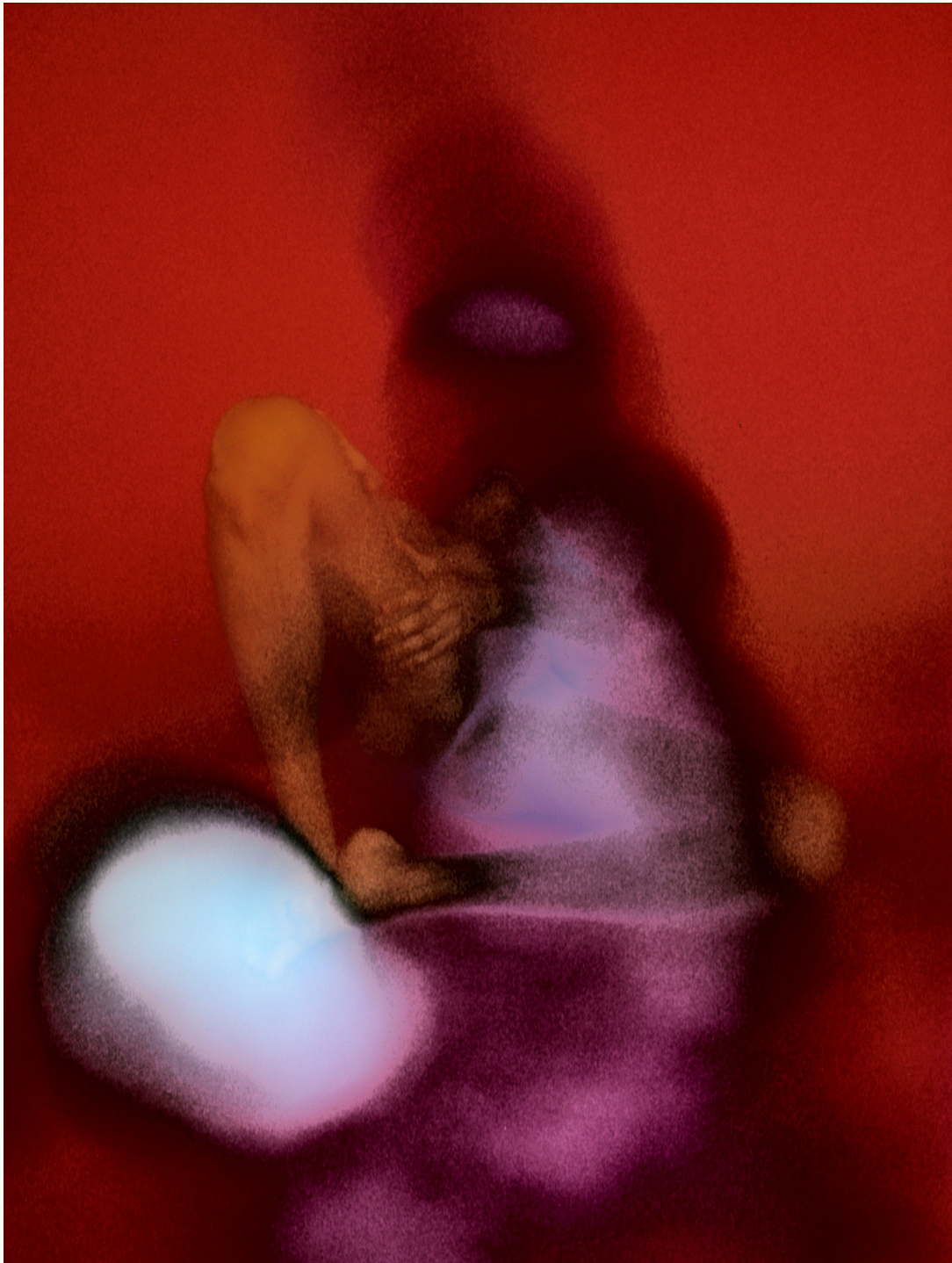
Looking Away

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



The Giant

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



Contact

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



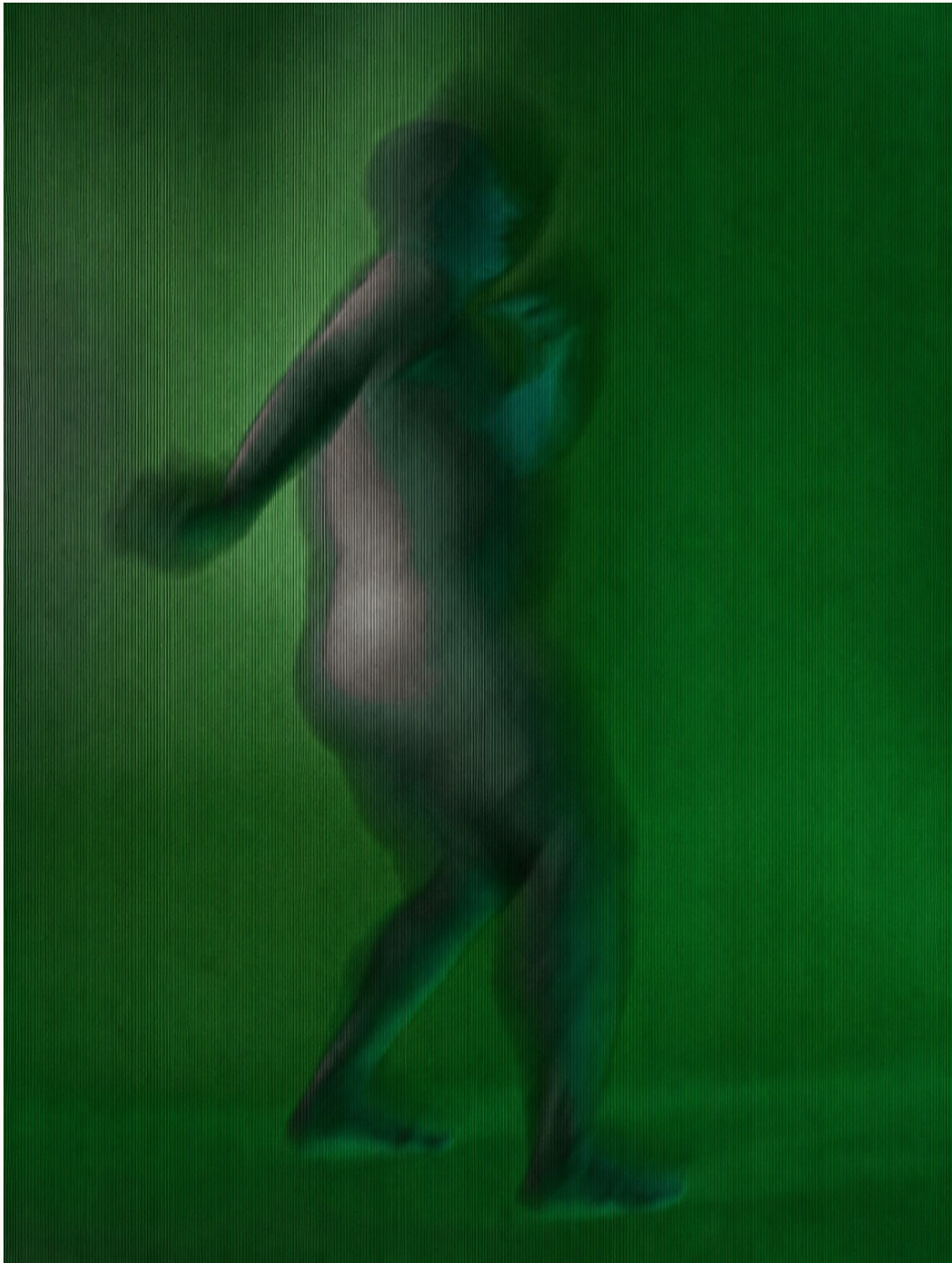
Is it what you're looking for?

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



Falling

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.



A Nude Without Presence

Marina Smith, 2026. Digital photograph.